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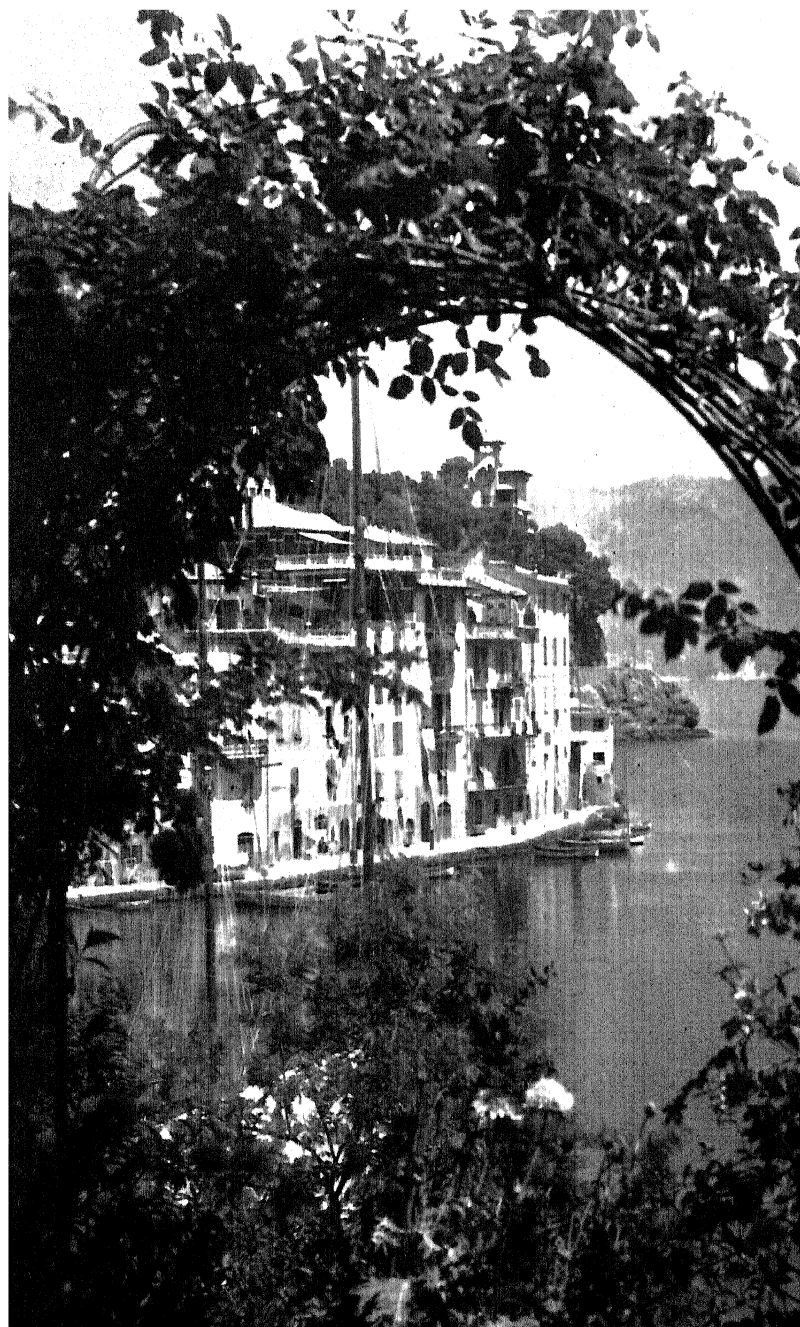
BY ITALIAN SHORES
(GENOA TO NAPLES)

By the same author

THE INTIMATE CHARM OF KENSINGTON

PARIS TO-DAY—also published in America

THE BOOK OF DUBLIN



By Italian Shores

(Genoa to Naples)

by

ERIC WHELPTON

LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

A GREAT MANY years ago, I tossed a sixpence into the air to decide my fate. On the turn of the coin, I would go to Italy or to Morocco and try my luck. It seems perhaps rather a silly thing to do, but, like many young men of twenty-five, I believed that my life was over and that it did not matter very much where I went. My greatest ambition had been to join the Foreign Service, but a serious illness had prevented me from finishing the examination, in which, indeed, I might not have been successful. The girl I had hoped to marry had died in tragic circumstances. I felt that I did not care much where I went, so long as I left England for a land of sunshine and adventure and would meet no one to remind me of the past and of the career that I had planned.

As chance would have it I went to Italy, and if I did not make a fortune or have the wild adventures that I expected, I stored up a rich treasure of memories and gained a greater appreciation of beauty. I also learned to love the Italians, not blindly but with a full understanding of their human qualities and of their sense of values which is universal and eternal rather than national and prejudiced.

Metternich once said that Italy was not a country but a geographical expression. In a sense, he was right. The Lombards have little in common with the Sicilians, the Piedmontese with the Neapolitans and the Tuscans with the Venetians. In every region there is a clearly defined tradition of cultures, customs and speech. Most towns, great and small, retain something of the atmosphere of a capital, with their own newspapers, painters and writers and clearly defined regionalism. Unfortunately, in my estimation, the unification of Italy and the improvement of communications are tending to centralize not only the machinery of government but also the social and artistic life of the nation. Apart from Rome and Milan, most cities seem to be drifting into the same kind of amorphous provincialism that characterizes the lesser centres of industrialized countries like Great Britain and France.

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Still, the local spirit has not yet disappeared and the differences and the individuality of type remain and will subsist for many years to come. What then are the finer attributes peculiar to all Italians? The first, I feel sure, is that they are living in the same land and in the same climate that bred two great civilizations and that they are surrounded by so many superb works of art that they have innate good taste. The second is that most of them are closely linked to the soil and that they have preserved the virtues and defects of a peasant race. They are more attached to their families than to their country and yet they have something of the universal idea that is the heritage of the Roman Empire.

By instinct the Italians are not chauvinistic, and that is why they show little enthusiasm for war unless it is waged to defend their conception of freedom. Their minds are made up on most vital issues and their decision is such that it would be almost impossible to think of a Hamlet in Italy. "To be or not to be" is a question that only Nordics or Slavs would ask and consider a valid basis for an emotional problem, or so at any rate it seems to me.

When I left England, I had made no plans as to what I was going to do or how I was going to set about finding a job. For a very short while I taught in a girls' school in Florence, then I tried to sell antiques, but I have not the temperament to make a starving cat buy cream. Eventually I started a weekly paper in English which was, for a while, quite a success. It served its purpose, for it provided me with an income and enabled me to travel continuously in all parts of the country and to meet people of all classes.

It was not my first visit to Italy. As a very small child, I had been taken by my parents to Lombardy at a time when memories of the Risorgimento had not yet vanished. The street scene impressed itself on me because it still held the varied pageantry which travellers of the early nineteenth century found so delightful: Bersaglieri in their dark green uniforms with their hats bedecked with clusters of cocks' feathers, cavalry officers in their ample scarlet-lined cloaks, peasants in costume, workmen in picturesque garb. . . . Industrialism had made little impression and everything was incredibly cheap. The painter or the writer from abroad could live simply but well on a hundred and twenty lire a month. If there were widespread poverty, wine and many other minor luxuries could be obtained for a few pence. The open country was within easy reach of the inhabitants

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of even the largest towns. The population of Rome was under five hundred thousand souls and within the walls of the capital there were large gardens, small estates and even vineyards. . . . In places remote from the railways, conditions had scarcely changed for three hundred years. Unity had brought certain benefits, especially in the south, but there were complaints that the cost of living had risen.

I returned to Italy shortly after the First World War with the intention of buying an estate agency in Florence. I stayed there for a few months to learn my new job, which looked as if it might be a very interesting one. After years of turmoil, it was not astonishing that exiles of every type thronged to Italy in the hopes of finding peace. In the course of a single morning an ex-queen, a banished prime minister and several distinguished White Russians came to my office. For a while a Baltic baron gave me the run of his thirteenth-century castle perched high up on one of the foothills of the Apennines. On cool autumn mornings we would breakfast in the courtyard under a fig tree and look out at the endless ranges of blue mountains in the distance, the valleys cut by deep shadows, the scattered white farms, and the cypresses wending up the slopes in procession on each side of a track to a huge villa. The silence would be broken by the clear bells of the village churches, and gradually the mist in the hollows would be dispelled by the heat of the sun.

In those few weeks, I visited dwellings of every type, from old palaces in the narrow streets of the city to the large sixteenth- and seventeenth-century residences which are dotted about all over Tuscany. I grew to appreciate their sober harmony, the bold use of carving and frescoes and the landscape which derives so much beauty from the civilization which has created it. Without the centuries of toil of the past, the Italian scene would be like that of any other country in the same latitude, but the Romans, the people of the Renaissance and the peasants of all ages have shaped it to a pattern which can be found nowhere else.

As for myself, my eyes were opened to new aesthetic pleasures. My romantic taste for mere prettiness was dispelled. I could revel in the sensuous exuberation of a rococo façade, the sophistication of a baroque church or fountain, or simply the seemingly casual but perfect composition of a small village. I had got rid of the Englishman's innate yearning for the picturesque that impels him to go to

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Switzerland and Bavaria and build bogus half-timbered houses in Surrey, and I felt all the better for it.

Unfortunately, in 1920, Italy was still a prey to post-war social disturbances, and I thought that she was on the eve of a revolution so I went back to England. Had I stayed I might have made a comfortable little fortune and should have probably retired a long time ago.

In the eighteen months I spent in England, I tried once more to get into the Foreign Service and I fell more deeply in love than ever with the girl whose death was to send me out on my wanderings again. It was then that I entrusted my future to the chance turn of the coin which brought me back to Florence.

My first efforts to get work were far from successful, but my experiences were not unprofitable. For a while, I lived simply in near-slums in little pensions which were far too humble for the most unpretentious of British or American spinsters. I learned Italian and the Italian way of life, which has so much to commend it in my eyes.

I was fortunate, for the Tuscans may have many defects, but they do have a sense of the values that I personally enjoy: good conversation, fine turns of speech and intense appreciation of their own art, past and present. Perhaps more than many other Italians, they are near to the land, in this case a land which is rich in all the natural fruits of the earth. I found a room in the top of an old tower on the south bank of the Arno. From my windows I could see Giotto's tower and Brunelleschi's dome in a sea of roofs, with the Arno winding through the city in the foreground and, in the background, the dramatic sweep of the hills of Fiesole and Vincigliata with the Apennines behind them. By craning my neck I could perceive the heights of Vallombrosa, wreathed in a tenuous mist in summer and snow clad in winter.

On Sundays, in summer, I would walk miles through olive groves and vineyards, to return at night by winding paths which overlooked the lights of Florence in the valley. From all sides came the song of nightingales, the metallic sounds of the cricket to the accompanying chorus of croaking frogs. As a rule, I had dined in a country tavern and spent the evening drinking rough chianti with villagers, who, though frequently illiterate could express so much in their subtle, harsh dialect. In spite of the heat I could cover the ground easily enough until I reached the narrow street of the old town darkened by the overhanging eaves of the ancient palaces.

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For a few years, the newspaper flourished pretty well, in spite of my rather nonchalant attitude to work. There were, I admit, a great many distractions to lure me away from business, and I seized every excuse to go wandering. There were correspondents and advertising canvassers to be appointed, places to be written up, and hosts of other jobs to be done which were more or less necessary. I ranged Italy from one end to the other, at all times of the year, and saw it in an intimate way that is not open to the most persistent of tourists. I had contacts everywhere, and they were forced on me by circumstances and not by choice, so that I met a great many people that I should not have known in the ordinary way. One or two were crooks, a few of them were bores, but I got to know and like the Italians from most parts of the peninsula, with their curious blend of cynicism and kindness, romanticism and realism, though, in my opinion, their sense of realism predominates.

During these years I watched the growth and development of fascism, and assessed it, rightly I think, as part of the development of a country young in national spirit and anxious to catch up with powers whose evolution had been more rapid.

I did not care about Mussolini or his regime which I saw from very nearby and from its beginnings, as I witnessed some of the phases of the March on Rome.

The political commotions of the period tended increasingly to spoil my enjoyment of the life that I was leading, and this, with other factors, induced me to return to England once more.

I left with some regret. I missed the intimate dinners in small trattorias where the long evenings passed all too quickly in conversation with men like Scott-Moncrieff, Norman Douglas or Reggie Turner, an intimate of Oscar Wilde's, and a man of unsurpassed wit and charm. I cordially disliked the rather nondescript suburb where I had to make my home and felt lost without the particular graces and pleasures of life in Italy. When I woke up in the morning, I knew there was no possibility that before the week was out I should be speeding on the Rome express through the gracious land of Umbria, with its ruins and winding rivers, its broad horizons seemingly designed for the eighteenth-century painter. There would be no more drives to Genoa by hill and sea, no small and undiscovered cities to explore, no more week-ends in the chestnut forests of the Apennines.

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I often went back to my old haunts and with keen pleasure, but it was not quite the same thing. I felt, and I still feel it, that a lifetime would not be sufficient for me to see all that I want to see in Italy. The finest scenery and the finest buildings grow in beauty if you live constantly in their presence and every day they can take on a different aspect and be viewed with increased appreciation.

In the early phases of the Second World War, I was, like many others, oppressed with the sentiment that I might never be able to go back to the places in France and Italy which meant so much to me. As time went on it was replaced by the fear that they might be destroyed in the course of hostilities, that the desolation of Western Europe would be such that its works of art and its subtle charms would have vanished for ever.

I came across North Africa in the train of the Eighth Army, and with the relief of the prospect of victory, came the growing expectation and hope that I should see the liberation of the countries where I had spent so many happy years.

Racked by seasickness, I was nevertheless overcome with great emotion when I saw the Bay of Syracuse from the deck of a minesweeper. It was Italy and I wondered what our reception would be, how the people would welcome us now that we came as invaders.

I need not have troubled myself on this point. If our coming brought mixed blessings, the timeless spirit of the Italians had remained unchanged. Through their great sufferings they were, if anything, closer to the land than under fascism, and the spurious arrogance of the Blackshirts no longer made itself felt. It was I who was different, for I am not imbued with the military spirit and found no pleasure in being part of an Army of Occupation, and still less in being in uniform and cut off from close contact with the populace. As a soldier, or at any rate in an alien organization, I had no consciousness of being in a different country, and absorbed by work which was not too congenial, my senses were more or less deadened to the art and to the scenery which had given me so much joy before.

I went all over Sicily, to southern Italy, Rome and right up to Florence, but it was only occasionally that I could react normally to the beauty around me. From time to time, I would get back to ordinary mental processes in conversation with the Italians whose humour or intelligence would drive the present out of my head. Eventually, I made one or two friends who transported me back to

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the life I had known, simply because they thought in terms of permanent values, instead of the frightful actualities. It is that quality which has tided Italy over the humiliations, disillusionment and sufferings of defeat, that and the southerner's glorious capacity of living for the present and getting the greatest possible fun out of it.

However, like the cultured Chinese of past ages, I have come to the conclusion that war is not a topic fit for the polite consideration of civilized people. I was flown out of Florence on an ambulance plane and passed unseeing over some of the world's finest scenery.

A few months later, I gazed unfeelingly at the Bay of Naples from the deck of a trooper homeward bound. I could not have felt more relieved though I was sorry to leave my friends. Still I vowed that in no circumstances would I go back until all foreign troops had disappeared.

The journey to revisit the places described in this book was made to recapture for myself past appreciations and the lasting joys of a lovely country. I went down the west coast, as the title of this volume indicates, but now as ever I refuse to be tied to a label. When I wanted to go inland or out to the islands of the Tyrrhenian I did so. I was looking for the best that I could find, and that is a maxim which can be employed also by the captious critic. Why be too logical when the full application of logic drives humanity to despair. If nothing else, a visit to Italy will help you to break a few rules with a clear conscience. At the best, as Addison said:

"There is certainly no place in the world where a man may travel with greater pleasure and advantage than Italy.

"One finds something more particular in the face of the country and more astonishing in the works of nature than can be met with in any other part of Europe."

I

THE GATEWAY TO ITALY

The Gateway to Italy. Passing through Turin. The Plain of Piedmont. First impressions of Genoa. The Historical Background. The Ligurians.

I MUST CONFESS that I never cross from one country to another without a certain thrill. In many parts of Western Europe the passing of a frontier implies a sudden change of architecture, customs, race and language and, sometimes, even of scenery and vegetation. I have frequently left Brigue in the snow to find myself only twenty minutes later at Domodossola in radiant sunshine. On the Swiss side of the Simplon there are pine trees, chalets and gothic ruggedness. When the Italian slope is reached there are pink-washed houses, vineyards, tall Lombard steeples and a southern radiance in pleasing contrast to the trim neatness of the Rhône Valley.

On the Mont Cenis line, the transformation is more gradual, but since I am a good sleeper, I usually awake at Modane, after having had my last glimpse of France somewhere in the plains of the Ile de France. Once or twice, I have roused myself to look at the Lac de Bourget shimmering in the moonlight or to gaze on the foothills of the Alps, near Chambéry, a town I have always wanted to visit but have never succeeded in reaching. It is, I am told, a city of arcaded streets and ancient monuments that holds many memories of the days when it was the capital of Savoy, an ancient Duchy with fine traditions.

The weather has never failed me at Modane. Invariably I have been there to the accompaniment of clear blue skies with snow and ice on the high peaks above the pass sparkling in the morning sunshine. Somewhere in the background there is the sound of rushing water from a mountain torrent. The French Douaniers and the Italian Guardie di Finanza pace the station platform as if they had

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nothing else to do but to display their uniforms and parade their national idiosyncrasies.

Travelling, I feel, has become a shade too easy. It is no longer a great adventure, reserved for those in search of beauty, learning or new worlds to conquer. For hundreds of years, people have flocked to Italy from all parts of the globe, but they did so in the face of incredible difficulties. The roads were long and arduous, almost impassible in winter and unbearably hot in summer. There were foot-pads and brigands to be faced, the worst of inns and insecure means of transport. Travel, in fact, was only for the very rich or the very poor, those who came with a convoy of servants, coaches and couriers, or those who came quite simply on foot and lodged in peasants' houses.

Until macadamized highways were constructed in the nineteenth century progress by land routes must have been far from easy. Indeed Englishmen doing the Grand Tour frequently avoided the mountain passes by embarking with their horses and vehicles at Marseilles for Leghorn or Civita Vecchia. The first good coast road from Nice to Genoa was built by Napoleon, but to the north the way over the Simplon was blocked by snow and far too steep to be used for more than a few weeks in the year. So for a long time, the Mont Cenis continued to be the main gateway into Italy from the west in spite of the perils and hardships that Walpole describes in his letters. Writing to Richard West from Turin in 1739, he says:

"We were eight days in coming hither from Lyons; the four last in crossing the Alps. Such uncouth rocks and such uncomely inhabitants! At the foot of Mont Cenis we were obliged to quit our chaise, which was taken to pieces and loaded on mules, and we were carried in low arm-chairs on poles, swathed in beaver bonnets, beaver gloves, beaver stockings, muffs and bear-skins. When we came to the top, behold the snows fallen! and such quantities, and conducted by such heavy clouds that hung glouting that I thought we would never have waded through them. The descent is two leagues, but steep and rough as O's father's face over which, you know, the devil has walked with hobnails in his shoes. But the dexterity and nimbleness of the mountaineers are inconceivable: they run with you down steep and frozen precipices, where no man, as men are now, could possibly walk. We had twelve men, and nine mules to carry us, our servants and our baggage, and were about five hours in this agreeable jaunt!

BY ITALIAN SHORES

The day before, I had a cruel accident, and so extraordinary a one that it seems to touch upon the traveller. I had brought with me a little black spaniel of King Charles's breed, but the prettiest, fattest, dearest creature! I had let it out of the chaise for the air, and it was waddling along close to the head of the horses, on the top of the highest Alp, by the side of a wood of firs. There darted out a young wolf, seized poor Tory by the throat, and before we could possibly prevent it, sprung up the side of the rock and carried him off. . . .

"What is the extraordinary part of it is that it was but two o'clock and broad sunshine. . . ."

Wolves also on occasion attacked solitary voyagers who were frequently overwhelmed by the snow. As it was, Walpole's party were lucky. Other parties took as much as twelve hours to do the trip that he described.

By the beginning of the next century the road over the mountains was completed. In mid-Victorian times, an eccentric Englishman used to drive with his family home to England in an open wagonette. One year two of his six children died from cold and exposure, but that did not deter him from repeating the experiment the following winter.

After leaving the towering peaks of Modane, the line goes down a valley into the plains of Piedmont and passes through enchanting scenery. On either side there are ruined castles and towers, houses with overhanging eaves, vineyards and peach orchards. First of all however, the train passes under the Mont Cenis, through a tunnel nearly eight miles long which was cut between 1861 and 1870, and was indeed the first direct means of communication by rail between France and Italy, avoiding the long and tedious journey over the pass. There are, however, one or two people still living who can remember going from Rome to Paris by coach. Rich men who did the thing in style would have as many as thirty relays of horses arranged for them. They took their bedding, silver and china so as not to have to rough it too much in wayside inns.

At the Italian end of the tunnel, Bardonecchia is a good winter's sports resort which has the great advantage of being easily accessible from England and of being sufficiently high to be fairly sure of having snow. Right up above, in seemingly inaccessible places, are the fortresses. They are garrisoned by Alpine troops who do most of their military service there without coming down except for man-

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œuvres and leave, just like the French soldiers who are stationed only a few miles away on the other side of the border.

In spite of the rather solitary lives they have to lead they are, as a rule, quite happy for they have the best of ski-ing and fishing at Government expense. The lakes and streams are full of trout, and if chamois are strictly preserved, it is extremely difficult to prevent poaching.

Though the valley narrows down to a gorge with steep slopes on either side, it is a long time before the Mont Cenis range disappears from sight. Before reaching the plain, the train passes through Susa, a town of great antiquity with a fine Roman arch in excellent state of preservation. Indeed one of the great charms of the southern slopes of the Alps is their wealth of remains of all periods. Aosta to the east was the capital of an Imperial province. Although in a mountainous setting, it has a triumphal arch built by Augustus, the ruins of a forum and ramparts of the same period which are fairly complete. In this enchanting district the vegetation of the north and of the south blends with great luxuriance, and the architecture of the Middle Ages mingles with buildings of an earlier and of a later date.

A few miles beyond Aosta and farther up the valley, the great white mass of Mont Blanc can be seen filling up the sky when it is not shrouded with mist and fog. In its own way quite as imposing as the famous view from Chamonix, it is in far better perspective and the glaciers and snowfields are not screened from the sun but gleaming in its radiance.

For some reason that I have never been able to fathom Piedmont with its infinite variety of landscape and romantic cities is neglected. Tourists rarely pause there on the way to central and southern Italy.

The more leisurely travellers of the past in their horse-drawn vehicles found delight in its rugged mountains, its foothills and their gradual introduction to the plain where grapes, figs and peaches grow in such profusion. They revelled in the easy courtesy of the inhabitants after the rough manners of the highlanders, and above all they loved Turin with its formal planning and arcaded streets. Here they found the ideal eighteenth-century capital, with a solemn but hospitable court, academies of the arts, a university, and one of the best operatic theatres in Italy.

This city has a sober attraction for those who are not wedded to

the over picturesque and who can admire the simple elegance of its layout. Compared to Rome or Florence its art treasures are negligible though it has some baroque palaces of great beauty and there are one or two outstanding masterpieces in the Pinacoteca, such as the "Tobias and the Angel" by Pollaiuolo, two fine Van Eycks and a Fra Angelico.

Another of Turin's attractions lies in its situation on the banks of the Po where there are riverside gardens. On the far side, the Monte dei Cappucini is a steep wooded hill accessible by funicular. From the summit can be had an extensive panorama of the city, the Alps and their foothills.

Although the seat of government was transferred to Florence in 1864 and six years later to Rome, Turin still preserves a metropolitan air, because of its large monuments, its royal palaces, and still more perhaps because the people of Piedmont are conscious of the great part they played in achieving the unity of their country. The most curious thing about them is that they have few of the characteristics that foreigners generally attribute to Italians. The local dialect resembles French and, until the middle of the nineteenth century, French was almost universal. Cavour himself spoke Italian with a marked accent, for he had to learn it quite late in life.

On this trip, however, like other tourists, I did not find time to stop on my way southwards. With a Florentine friend whom I had met in the train, I got out of my compartment to buy a *cestino* or packed lunch, which consisted of ham and salami, a fried veal cutlet, some cheese, some fruit and a cake, washed down by a good bottle of white wine. Those who travel widely in Italy become connoisseurs of *cestini* which vary considerably in price, quantity, and quality from place to place, but are always inexpensive and good. At one junction on the Florence-Rome line, an enterprising restaurateur used to produce a hot meal including spaghetti in oiled paper bags. He has retired with a large fortune, but the tradition is being carried on by his successor, in spite of world conflagrations, economic disturbances and international rivalries. Gastronomically the Italians have so far resisted all the evils of mass production and over-organization.

It was while pondering on this fact that I asked my companion whether he had ever seen a truffle hound, animals which were first bred and trained in Piedmont, if the old diarists are to be believed.

THE GATEWAY TO ITALY

His reply was that though he had owned several of these creatures, he had always preferred pigs, because of their superior intelligence and greater initiative. He added that the dogs were of no particular race but were selected because they had a vocation and a special aptitude for the job. The man who owned a really clever beast could make a good living without doing much work.

As the train rolled southward, I questioned my friend once more on general topics. He belongs to a family which has succeeded in maintaining more or less the same status for hundreds of years. His parents still live in a fine old palace in Florence, and keep up their estates in the country in spite of many vicissitudes. I wondered how it was that they had been able to do so.

He explained to me that his relations had, through the ages, always backed two parties, and this without any apparent calculation. In ancient times some had been Ghibellines and others had been Guefs. More recently, one of his uncles had been an ardent fascist, whilst he and his father had taken part in the resistance with the partisans on the side of the Allies. These political differences had never caused any rift in their family life for they were typical of the expedients used by the small Italian states to preserve their freedom.

In Piedmont such divisions had never existed because the Dukes of Savoy, and later the Kings of Savoy and Sardinia, had always played off the French against the Austrians and so they had maintained the independence of their country. It was this circumstance that enabled the Piedmontese to take the lead at the time of the Risorgimento. Unlike Italians in other parts of the peninsula, they had been relatively free from foreign domination and they have probably a greater sense of the significance of nationality. These rather earnest considerations did not prevent us from looking out at the pastoral landscape of rolling plain, broken here and there by small hills. We passed Asti where the sparkling wine is produced, and Alessandria, a largish town of no outstanding interest beyond the fact that it is of great antiquity. The scenery here is too intimate to make much impression on the fastly moving traveller, and it is certainly not dramatic enough to make him wish to stay.

With surprising suddenness, the mountains reappeared on either side of the line. Had we been driving along on the open road we could have looked back at the Alps in the far distance and seen the

lower range of the Apennines in front of us. In winter, they are usually covered with snow.

Shortly afterwards, the train dived into a tunnel, to emerge in a deep valley which has the aspect of an industrial suburb of a large city. Another plunge into darkness, a short one this time, and the main station of Genoa is reached.

I have always been amused at the contrast between my impressions of this place and those of nineteenth-century travellers. Dickens, for instance, one of the best reporters of all time, represents the Genoese as an excitable southern race, rather like the Neapolitans.

In this case he was, I think, clearly wrong. In their own country, the Ligurians have the reputation of being cold, silent and frugal. They are often referred to as the Scots of Italy and they certainly have much in common with them. In Genoa, men with huge fortunes will frequently drive to their offices in shabby old flivvers instead of the Isottas and the Alfa-Romeos favoured by people of the same status in Milan or Turin. On the other hand, owing to their past and present history, they are perhaps the most cosmopolitan of Italians. For centuries, sailors have left this coast for all parts of the world. In the past, as indeed to-day, they were in close contact with the countries of the Black Sea and of the Near East. Columbus, a Genoese of Jewish origin, discovered America, though he went there on behalf of the King of Spain. His fellow citizens of the present time have built some of the finest and swiftest liners in existence.

Italians tend to consider the United States in the light of a second country, because most of them have relations established there, and thousands of them have worked in America. In Genoa, the link is still closer as ships arrive almost daily from New York.

Liguria comprises the narrow strip of coast from the French frontier down to the River Magra which is just a few miles to the south of the Gulf of Spezia. Inland, long ranges of mountains form a barrier on the frontiers of Piedmont, Lombardy and Emilia. It was thanks largely to this natural fortification that the commerce of Genoa was able to develop and flourish through the ages.

The Ligurians are racially of mixed origin, for Greek and Etruscan settlers intermarried with the Gauls, who had come to Italy with the Celtic invasions that had swept over Europe a thousand years or more before the birth of Christ. Later, Hannibal's Carthaginians destroyed Genoa, which was rebuilt by the Romans. Goths and

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Lombards in turn occupied the city, but here, as elsewhere, they merged with the local population and left scarcely any traces of their passage.

This fine sheltered bay with its splendid strategic position could not fail to become the leading trading centre of the rocky Ligurian Littoral. With the break-up of the Roman Empire Genoa was one of a number of small maritime republics that flourished on the coast of Italy.

Serving as an outlet to the rich produce of Lombardy and Piedmont, her fleets grew in size and warlike efficiency and not only repelled the Saracens but drove them out of Corsica, where they had established themselves. Smaller and weaker states like Rapallo and San Remo were absorbed by alliance or by conquest and assisted her in the long struggle against Pisa, her greatest rival in the west. This rich republic was for a while one of the leading powers of the Mediterranean with settlements and colonies of its own.

Her predominance came to a sudden end when her might was completely destroyed by the Genoese Admiral Doria, at the battle of Meloria near Spezia in 1284. He followed up his victory by filling up the mouth of the Arno and so put an end to the commercial activities of his enemies.

For nearly a century, Genoa continued to expand and even looked like having the monopoly of the carrying trade of the Inland Sea. Her ships had transported vast armies of Crusaders to Palestine and the Levant. Her statesmen had overawed the Emperors of Byzantium and forced their way into the Black Sea. They established depots, not only on the south coast, but even in the Crimea and on the shores of the Sea of Azov.

This sudden and rapid development of her sphere of influence inevitably brought her into conflict with Venice whose ambitions and aspirations were so like her own. For a while the fortunes of war were fluctuating with the balance slightly in favour of the western republic. At the battle of Curzola in 1294 another Doria destroyed sixty-five Venetian ships, captured eighteen more with seven thousand prisoners, among whom was a young man named Marco Polo. During the four years that he was in Genoese hands he wrote his immortal memoirs, and it is said that his story so impressed his captors that they set him free.

In 1379, after a succession of victories, yet another Doria came

within an ace of capturing Venice in the course of a long siege during which his troops established themselves at Chioggia and on the Lido. Had he pushed on in the initial stages of his campaign, he would have easily penetrated into the city which was almost defenceless. Eventually the invading forces were driven back. The Adriatic republic not only survived but replaced her rival as the leading maritime power in the Mediterranean.

Genoa's great weakness was that her citizens never succeeded in establishing a really satisfactory form of government. In the fourteenth century, Boccanegra, the hero of the well-known opera, had been chosen as the first Doge, but the endless rivalry of the principal aristocratic families, led to factions which prevented her from holding the predominance that her commercial activities and her naval strength could have gained for her.

As elsewhere in Italy there were Guelfs and Ghibellines, but there were also dissensions between the partisans of an alliance with France and those who sought the support of the Sforzas of Milan. Only on occasions did a Doria or a Boccanegra bring unity to a state which was so jealously watched by all her neighbours.

In the sixteenth century Andrea Doria, one of the greatest Italians in history, freed his native town from French rule, and took a part in winning the battle of Lepanto when all Christendom united to drive back the Turkish menace. Nevertheless the advance of the Ottomans in the Near East gradually eliminated all that was left of the Genoese Empire. The Black Sea settlements had gone. Now the colonies on the Greek Islands and North Africa were taken in their turn.

Having lost her chief sources of wealth and manpower, Genoa could no longer defend herself against invasions by land. In 1684 there was a brief occupation by Louis XIV's French troops. In 1746 a small boy named Balilla instigated a successful rebellion against an Austrian garrison which had been installed in the town a few months previously. A few years later Corsica, which had been in constant rebellion, was sold to France, and so Napoleon became a French citizen. If the English had been less parsimonious he might well have lived to lead their armies, for the island had first been offered to George III's Government who were unwilling to pay a modest price for one of the greatest strategic centres of the Mediterranean.

Needless to say, the republic was unable to withstand the onslaught

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of Bonaparte's armies. In 1800, by one of those unexpected changes that occur in the tide of war, the British and the Neapolitans succeeded in besieging Massena in the city. Over twenty thousand people died of starvation and the French general had to capitulate only to return a fortnight later at the head of a victorious army.

After the battle of Waterloo, Genoa and all Liguria was made over to the King of Sardinia and so was annexed to Piedmont. The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of depression and almost of digression. Having lost their independence the Genoese only began to display their traditional enterprise and initiative after the final unification of Italy. From 1860 onwards they set out to capture for their country the carrying trade of the Mediterranean. The harbour was enlarged and they began to compete effectively with Marseilles. They built swift liners of daring design, and once again their sailors set out for the Levant, the Black Sea and North Africa as in the past, as well as to North and South America. By the side of the tangled streets of the old city, there grew up a modern town with spacious buildings and even skyscrapers. The astute commercial spirit of the Ligurian has gained for them great wealth, even though they have not abandoned their traditional cautiousness and frugality.

II

IMPRESSIONS OF GENOA

Some famous travellers' impressions of Genoa. The Charm of the old city. The Bank of St. George. Hillside resorts and seaside suburbs. The Campo Santo.

“GENOA STANDS at the north-western point of Italy and is, as it were, its key note. No place is more imbued with the characteristics, the beauty, the colour of Italy. Its ranges of marble palaces and churches rise above the blue waters of the bay, interspersed with the brilliant green of orange and lemon groves, and backed by swelling mountains.”

These lines were written by Augustus Hare in 1876, and his sentiments were shared by a great many travellers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Horace Walpole declared that he was afraid to stay long in Genoa, lest he should be tempted to prolong his sojourn there and prevented from continuing his journey to Florence and Rome. Dickens expressed his view that the “Bay is less striking at Naples than at Genoa, the shape of the latter being more perfect in its beauty, and its smaller size enabling you to see it all at once, and feel it more like an exquisite picture.”

Unfortunately in the twentieth century the growth of the suburbs has rather marred this lovely landscape. Formerly, as soon as the confines of the city were reached, the country houses of the nobility began, with their vineyards, their splendid gardens each of them with magnificent panoramas of the Ligurian Alps and of the Mediterranean.

Nevertheless, nothing can destroy Genoa's lovely framework of sea and mountain, and the greater part of its interesting old streets and buildings have survived the destructions of war and innovation. Only too often travellers pass it by without realizing what they have

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missed in not seeing the grandeur of its ancient palaces and the infinite variety of its surroundings.

In the past, however, people felt differently. The slowness of transport and greater leisure enabled them to enjoy much that escapes our notice to-day. Frequently, too, ennui or just the need for economy induced them to make prolonged stays in France or on the coast of Italy, and Liguria with its mild climate and semi-tropical vegetation attracted many notable visitors. So it was that many a strange cortège came this way.

After Shelley's tragic death, Byron came northwards from Pisa with five carriages, seven servants, a monkey, some dogs and several waggonloads of furniture. He installed himself in a large pink villa, the Casa Saluzzo, which is still to be seen in a countrified lane on the hill of Albaro only a few hundred yards to the east of the Brignole station. With him was his mistress, Contessa Guiccioli, and her father and brother. The Leigh Hunts and their numerous progeny who had poisoned his existence in the palace at Pisa, were settled at a safe distance, whilst Trelawny, the garrulous ex-pirate, was busy on the yacht *Bolivar* in the harbour or cruising down to Leghorn. For the poet, apart from the *mal du siècle* that tormented him so perpetually, life should have been tolerable. In his study, which overlooked the garden and the sea, he wrote the last stanzas of *Don Juan*, and dreamed of new worlds to conquer. A few months later his meditations were interrupted by the arrival of the beautiful Lady Blessington and her circus, which included her complacent husband, her sister, the usual train of servants and the good-looking Count d'Orsay, who was to be her friend and companion for so many years.

Although there is good reason to believe that she had been sold to both her husbands, her relations with Byron were on an intellectual plane. She kept detailed records of her meetings with him, and eleven years later she published her *Conversations with Lord Byron* in which she gives a full account of her stay in Genoa.

Countess Guiccioli was unaccountably jealous of this platonic friendship and took no part whatsoever in the entertainment of these exotic visitors.

Eventually the Blessingtons set off for the south, abandoning the poet to his ever-increasing fits of boredom and restlessness.

It was at this stage that one of the Greek Committees of Liberation appealed to him for financial assistance. Always on the lookout for

novelty and action, Byron not only subscribed handsomely, but began to prepare for the expedition which was to be the cause of his death at Missolonghi. A ship was bought in the port, and gorgeous uniforms were designed and ordered. They included tunics of scarlet with gold braiding and huge steel helmets with large plumes.

In July 1823, Byron set out for his last journey in very rough weather. He took with him his horses and his dogs, but he left behind his mistress who had decided to rejoin her husband.

Twenty years later another procession of literary pilgrims arrived at Genoa. This time it was Dickens with his family, who had been advised by Lady Blessington to rent a house for the summer at Albaro. He found that Lord Byron's Casa Saluzzo had been turned into a wineshop and so he had to content himself with the Villa Bagnerello, which he nicknamed the Pink Gaol.

After a brief period of disillusionment, the novelist became delighted with his new dwelling.

"It is in one of the most splendid situations imaginable," he wrote. "The noble bay of Genoa, with the deep blue Mediterranean, lies stretched out near at hand; monstrous old desolate houses and palaces are dotted about; lofty hills with their tops often hidden in clouds, and with strong forts on their craggy sides are close upon the left; and, in front, stretching from the walls of the house down to a ruined chapel which stands on the bold and picturesque rock on the seashore, are green vineyards, where you may wander all day long in the partial shade, through interminable vistas of grapes, trained on a rough trellis work across the narrow paths."

To-day, arterial roads and busy thoroughfares pass through Albaro, but in between them there are still large old villas in a rustic setting. If the suburbs have spread up the hillsides, the splendid natural décor of Genoa remains unchanged.

The traveller's first impressions on coming out of the main station are of a modern city, like so many others in the States or Germany. There is a surging movement of trams and buses, a rush of swift cars well controlled by the traffic cops and a predominance of men who are quite obviously office workers. An atmosphere of intense activity and prosperity prevails, but with none of the masculine elegance which is so peculiar to Italy.

Buildings are massive by European standards and unusually lofty, for Genoa, like Manhattan, is pent up on a narrow strip of rock.

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Near the Piazza de Ferrari there are a couple of skyscrapers of over forty floors, and doubtless more will be constructed, as the city already stretches many miles along the coast.

Nevertheless, leading out of the Piazza Acquaverde opposite the main station, the Via Balbi is a street of ancient palaces of which two are especially noteworthy. The first is the Palazzo Durazzo, later a Royal Residence with a colonnaded courtyard, and the second, the University with its splendid monumental stairway. Close to them stands the Church of San Carlo, a masterpiece of Jesuit architecture, a style which pleases me personally because of its exuberance and wealth of ornamentation.

A little farther on, the Durazzo Palavicini Palace houses a notable collection of pictures, including works by Veronese, Ribera, Domenichino, Guido Reni and many other painters of the Italian school. One of the principal attractions here, and in many of the older buildings of the town, lies in the fine proportion and harmony of the structure, the simple but effective design of the pillars and porticoes, and the general soberness of aspect which is in keeping with the character of the local population.

Almost everywhere is manifested an obvious dislike of display. Any extravagance of decoration is usually expressed in terms of paint and gilding which is rarely if ever successful.

Although most buildings in Genoa are definitely characteristic in their style, the great majority of them were planned by Lombard architects who came, century after century, to work in the republic. As soon as the southern confines of Liguria are passed, the artistic influences are either Florentine or Pisan according to the period of the work. The hatred that existed between the Genoese and the Tuscans was such that few, if any, artists came northwards in search of employment with the former.

The Via Garibaldi, linked to the Via Balbi by the Via Cairoli, is another street of palaces, the most magnificent perhaps of its kind in Europe, for it is complete, and the old mansions are in a perfect state of preservation. Most of them have been turned into offices, but they are occupied principally by commercial corporations who take the greatest pride in keeping them up as they were.

The Palazzo Rosso's picture gallery contains sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pictures, whilst the Palazzo Bianco houses a museum of Genoese history and art and some relics of the Risorgi-

BY ITALIAN SHORES

mento. The Palazzo Doria-Tursi, now the Town Hall, has a magnificent garden with a fine Baroque fountain. Like the other buildings in this splendid street they were constructed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and their decoration belongs to the period.

It is useless to walk hurriedly through the Via Garibaldi. To appreciate its beauty, one must stroll through it in the early morning or late at night. Even then, the street is too narrow for the grand scale of the houses on either side, but as I have observed, lack of space has played an important part in shaping the configuration of Genoa.

The Piazza de Ferrari is assuredly the hub of the city. On one side, the Opera House was destroyed by Allied bombing in the Second World War. On the other stands the former Palace of the Doges, the greater part of which was rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1777.

Behind this structure, and in the area contained by the Via Carlo Felice, the Via Garibaldi and the sea, lies the mediaeval town with its maze of narrow streets, its small squares and its black-and-white marble churches. To Dickens, and to many other travellers, this section seemed to be picturesque and rather squalid. He did not realize that behind many of these crumbling façades there were (and there still are) the counting houses of some of the richest men in Europe. Some of the alleys or *carugi* are no more than ten feet wide, but they are full of interest. Here and there over the lintel of a door, there are carvings of St. George and the Dragon, for St. George is the patron saint of Genoa. In other places, a glimpse inside a porch will discover groined halls and noble staircases. One of the most interesting of the narrow streets, is the Via dei Orifici, still mainly occupied by goldsmiths.

To the west of the Ducal Palace the thirteenth-century church of San Matteo contains the tombs of many of the Doria family, including a monument to the greatest of them all, the famous Andrea, an admiral, like many of his forbears, but also an eminent statesman. San Matteo is a small and unpretentious building with a simple façade of excellent proportions. The interior has no outstanding feature save for decorations and sculptures of only moderate merit. To the left there are some fourteenth-century cloisters of great beauty. The unadorned Gothic arches of brick are supported by pairs of slender columns with flowery capitals. Incongruous as this

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may sound, the effect is delightful, and this quiet corner is one of the most charming of the old town.

The small square in front of San Matteo is composed mainly of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century mansions which belonged formerly to the Doria family. Number Fourteen has a beautifully carved portal and their coat of arms in bas relief. It was given by the republic to Andrea in recognition of his services to the state. All these houses are faced in black and white. In spite of their aristocratic character, they have not the spaciousness and loftiness of the palaces in the Via Garibaldi and the Via Baldi, for they belong to an earlier and more heroic age when extreme lavishness was considered by the Genoese to be something in the nature of a crime. At no time and at no place did they display the extravagance of the great merchants in Venice or Florence or of the princely families in Rome, even though at a later date they built dwellings of undoubted splendour and magnificence.

A few minutes' walk away, through narrow streets always thronged with people, we reach the Cathedral of San Lorenzo, dating from the twelfth century but restored and altered on more than one occasion. It has kept in its present form the general attributes of the French Gothic style, with the black-and-white facings characteristic of Genoa. The pointed carved portals, the supporting statuary and the marble lions on either side of the steps that lead into the church have been untouched, and apart from anything else are a sufficient inducement for a visit to this place.

The interior is distinguished by its simplicity, and by that strange blending of Gothic arches and classical columns which is typical of Italy, and does not seem incongruous here. In spite of their nationality, the Florentines, Sansovino and Civitale were commissioned to do statues for the Chapel of St. John the Baptist, some of whose remains are said to be buried here.

In the treasury there is a fragment of the *Sacro Catino*, a vessel once believed to be made of a single emerald, and brought to Genoa by Crusaders. In the Napoleonic wars it was taken to Paris, and when sent back it was broken up and divided between Genoa and Turin. One legend was that this cup had been used by Jesus for the Sacrament of the Last Supper. According to another tradition it was given to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba. In the Middle Ages it was guarded at all times by a team of knights who dedicated themselves to this service.

A few hundred yards to the west of the cathedral the Loggia dei Banchi, half demolished by bombardments in the Second World War has been skilfully restored. The square of the same name was formerly used as a recruiting centre for seamen, as the docks of the old port are only in the next street, the Via Milano. Here is to be found one of the most interesting monuments in the whole city, the Banco di S. Giorgio, alleged to be the oldest bank in the world. For centuries this corporation was so wealthy that it formed, as it were, a state within a state, and more than once it saved the republic from bankruptcy, a fact that is not surprising since its revenues were quite as large.

The building was erected in the thirteenth century with the stonework of a castle belonging to the Venetians and laboriously transported by sea to its present site. It is a rather gloomy structure with narrow latticed windows and a pillared courtyard. In the great hall are the statues of former dignitaries of the city, some of whom were made to pay heavily for the privilege of being immortalized in this manner. By and large the Genoese are as canny as the people of Aberdeen and equally proud of the fact. Though thrifty they are very generous and can be lavish in their hospitality.

On one occasion the famous Andrea was entertaining the Ambassador to the Republic at the splendid Palazzo del Principe, which stands between the main railway station and the terminus of the port. At that time the waters of the bay came right up to the foundations of the house. After each course the admiral flung the gold plate on which it had been served into the sea. A costly gesture, but then perhaps he had grown tired of the constant accusations of meanness levelled against his countrymen.

The low arcaded houses opposite the Banco di S. Giorgio are the oldest dwellings in the town. Here are to be found ships' chandlers and fishermen's taverns where excellent meals are to be had at reasonable prices, if one is prepared to sit at plain deal tables in low groined rooms. The local white wines drawn straight from the wood are a clean drink and not too sweet, the best being Coronata and the Val Polcevera.

I find them superior to the bottled red Chianti which costs three or four times the price and is very heating in the summer.

Of the fish dishes the Zuppa di Pesca is not a patch on the French Bouillabaisse, and usually contains a curious assortment of fish with

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enormous heads and no flesh. I have acquired a taste for Calamai (squid) when they are small and well cooked, and for pasta served with pesto, a regional sauce made of basil, olive oil and Sardinian cheese. It has a rather pungent smell and flavour, but given the accompaniment of a good dry wine makes one of the best of savouries. Another commendable Genoese speciality is the red mushrooms au gratin, in their uncooked form, a type of toadstool, generally considered poisonous in most countries but highly palatable in Italy. I suppose it is rather risky to eat them but I prefer to take my chance of a sudden and violent death, rather than face up to the international cuisine so frequently served in many of the more reputable places.

The *sottocapa*, as the arcade is called, is a most colourful place but it must have been still more picturesque in the past. Right up to the end of the eighteenth century the Turkish slaves who manned the galleys were allowed to sell the wares that they made on the pavement outside. Some of them made so much money that they were able to buy their freedom, but they frequently took a great many years to do so.

Since Genoa was for some centuries a free port, people of all nationalities came there, and this accounts for the varied racial types that can be seen in its streets. The Ligurian is assuredly more of a Nordic than a Latin, both physically and temperamentally, but all along the coast one can find villages where the Barbary Corsairs have left descendants. For over a thousand years they raided these shores, and frequently attempted to make settlements. The peril from these pirates only disappeared definitely at the beginning of the nineteenth century when Algiers was dismantled after the Napoleonic wars.

The port of Genoa is best seen from above by taking a funicular up the Righi, a hill just at the back of the town, to the café restaurant. From this point there is a magnificent view of the harbour with its tangled mass of shipping, and of the city with its tiers of houses rising up the slopes. Broad boulevards named *Circonvallazione a Monte* wind their way up the heights through suburbs of massive blocks of flats and villas set in small gardens. Here and there clumps of trees indicate the presence of the parks that have been laid out in these new quarters. In other places an olive grove or a vineyard has survived recent urban developments.

A few buildings stand out clearly. To the right the slender light-

house, to the west of the old port. Just below, the immense Albergo dei Poveri, a Baroque palace has become a home for the destitute. Next to the skyscrapers are the two tall towers of the only remaining city gate.

The peaks on either side of the Righi are crowned with fortresses or mediaeval castles. At the back the broken ranges of the Ligurian Apennines rise, purple tinted in the distance. Beyond the chimney stacks and smoke of the industrial zone, the Riviera di Ponente stretches out towards France, a long indented rocky coast punctuated here with villages and towns, there with an occasional white steeple gleaming in the sunlight.

To the east, the line of seaside resorts, backed by the grey-green of the mountains, breaks off with the point of Portofino.

There is often a haze over the Mediterranean, but on a clear day the dark blue peaks of Corsica can be seen floating on a belt of mist.

The panorama from the Righi is at all times a splendid one, but it is at its best on a summer evening when the mass of the city looks like a jewelled diadem and the lights along the waterfront reach out until they merge with the stars on the horizon.

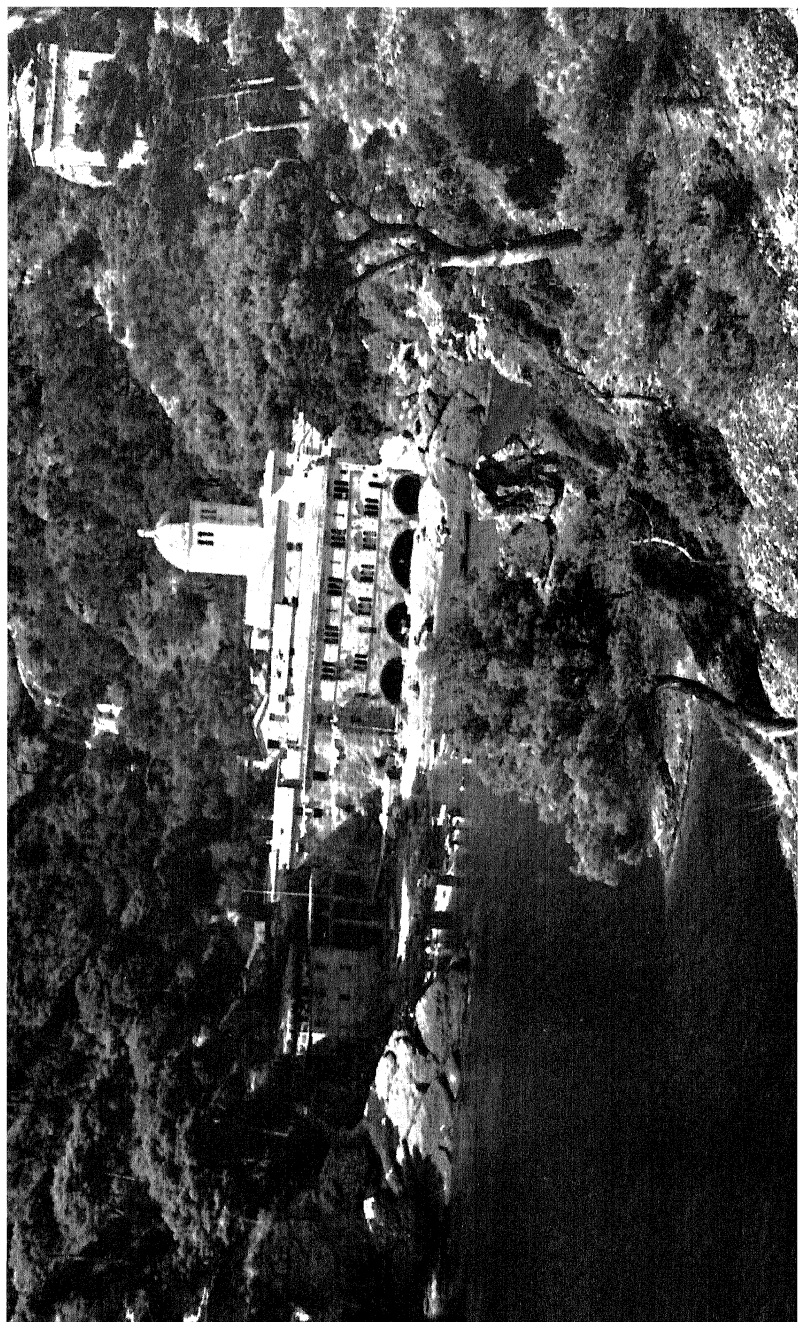
Of less obvious attraction is the Campo Santo, so beloved of the Victorian tourist. When you speak of it to a knowledgeable Genoese, he grows a shade uneasy, and no wonder! This cemetery was launched as a commercial venture by one of Canova's pupils and it is even more of a reflection of nineteenth-century bourgeois taste than the Albert Memorial in London. Still, as it is a few minutes' tram ride away in the suburb of Staglieno, I like to visit it from time to time.

To me its greatest charm lies in the fact that the people who commissioned these tombs and those who designed them were entirely devoid of self-consciousness and fully convinced of the excellence of the world that they lived in. The deceased died, I feel sure, in the certainty that they would go straight to Heaven, wearing the clothes of their own particular period.

So in one corner, there is a marble effigy of a little girl in embroidered pantalettes and crinoline being wafted skywards, whilst papa in bowler hat and frockcoat sobs his heart out next to mama in feathered toque and ample flounces, who buries her head on his shoulder. In one hand she clutches an umbrella. . . .

Another lady also in crinoline, mantle and hat has been equipped





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with wings to assure her swift passage to a better land. There are full-bosomed figures of Mercy (in ample robes) stroking the heads of small boys in sailor suits. An entire family of the bustle and bodice age watch a sturdy gentleman in evening dress and watch-chain being carried off to his last home by a couple of stalwart and well-clad angels.

These gems I have cited were only found after exhaustive research in this cemetery which is an extensive one. Nevertheless they are a pretty good indication of what can be seen there. "But", as I observed to a Genoese friend who mocked my liking for this place, "who are we to carp at the Victorians? We are so ashamed of our present taste that we shun the photographic and the realistic." The writers of guide books evidently agree with my sentiments, though they may be more sincere, for they are almost unanimous in stating that travellers should not fail to visit the Campo Santo.

III

THE SURROUNDINGS OF GENOA

The surroundings of Genoa. Mountain resorts. Quarto dei Mille and Garibaldi. Nervi. The fishing port of Camogli. The Portofino Peninsula and Monastery of San Fruttuoso.

IN ITALY, as elsewhere, old customs are rapidly dying out. It is many years since the ladies of Genoa wore the characteristic veil that was so becoming. On rare occasions countrywomen are to be seen wearing modernized versions of regional costume, but that is all.

One or two feast days are still celebrated with a certain pomp, as for instance Corpus Christi Day, when vast religious processions parade through the streets, and June 24th, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of the city, when there are illuminations and fireworks.

To see any of the traditional festas of Italy, one must go inland up into the mountains where the villagers like to take a holiday whenever a suitable occasion presents itself.

I cannot claim any wild enthusiasm for the scenery of the Apennines, except from a distance or for a very short time. In the summer the vegetation tends to be dried up and the landscape has a monotonous uniformity.

In very hot weather, however, it is pleasant to go to a place where the nights are cool, especially as from some of the peaks there are splendid views to be had of the surrounding countryside.

"A sea without fish, mountains without woods, men without faith and women without shame" is an old proverb about Genoa which is far from being true.

Augustus Hare suggests that it must be of Pisan origin, but regional rivalries in this country are of such ancient date that it may well have been current even in Roman times.

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If the hills around the city seem bare, many parts of the Apennines are covered with orchards or chestnut woods, and in the springtime with vast fields of narcissi.

A number of villages such as Torriglia, Uscio, Savignone and others, all of them about two thousand feet in altitude, are in pleasant rustic settings. Well-marked tracks lead up to still higher summits from which panoramas embrace the Alps and Corsica to the north and the Carrara range to the south. In winter they are usually covered with snow. On Sundays a fair number of Genoese come up for a day's ski-ing when conditions are favourable. As mountains, however, the Apennines do not stand comparison with the Alps, but they do add considerably to the dramatic quality of the landscape of the Riviera di Levante which stretches from Genoa down to Spezia.

Before the construction of railways and good roads, travellers usually avoided the perils and slowness of horse transport by going by sea. So Smollett on his way down to Leghorn chartered a felucca to carry him as far as Lerici, journeying only by day and putting in at night at Portofino and Sestri Levante, where he complained of the food and accommodation that was available. Since he was unusually critical and irascible, he only received the treatment that he deserved.

The first few places along the waterfront have long since become more or less suburbs of Genoa, since they are easily reached by bus, tram or train. In spite of this they have preserved a certain individuality, for a few hundred yards away from the shore the land rises steeply and the country begins with vineyards and olive orchards.

A little higher up perch real villages, clumps of red-tiled roofs gathered round white Ligurian belfries topped with green or grey cupolas.

Certainly there is a rush of traffic along the main coast road, but just below there are rocky inlets and little sandy bays, and, in between the houses, gardens filled with oleanders, bougainvilleas and other brightly coloured flowers. I find perhaps too many palms, trees for which I have the greatest aversion even in the tropics. In compensation, oranges and lemons ripen here and add their brilliance, which is set off by the dark green of their foliage and the brightness of the light.

Quarto dei Mille, five miles from the centre of Genoa, is already outside the strictly urban area. In the Villa Spinola which stands in

the part of the palace of the same name, there lived a certain Vecchi who had accompanied Garibaldi during the campaign of 1849. His son, later well known as the writer under the name of Jack la Bolina, told me many years ago how, as a midshipman in the Sardinian navy, he had met the great Liberator. It was in fact in this house that he stayed for the three weeks before he set out for the conquest of Sicily in 1860.

Preparations had to be made with the greatest secrecy, for though King Victor Emmanuel and Cavour connived at the proposed revolt they could not sanction it officially, and they would certainly have punished a failure. So for days on end conspirators kept on arriving from all parts of Italy to consult their leader, to bring arms and hide them in the neighbourhood.

Eventually, when all the plans were made and all the volunteers at hand, Nino Bixio and a few picked men seized a couple of old ships in Genoa harbour and brought them off shore.

Garibaldi and his "thousand" embarked in small boats, taking with them some rusty old muskets and a couple of ancient cannon, their only weapons for the conquest of a kingdom. The local Carabinieri watched the departure of this strange expedition, not knowing whether they should interfere. They were unable to get instructions from their superiors as all the telegraph wires had been cut.

Between the station and the beach there is a monument to Garibaldi whose courage and initiative were to achieve so much towards the unification of Italy.

Quinto, at the fifth Roman milestone from Genoa, is rather industrialized, but has some lemon groves and pleasant nineteenth-century villas with large gardens.

From here, as from the neighbouring places, there is a fine view of the Bay of Genoa and the coastline to the west of the city, and on the south side of the massive Portofino Peninsula.

Nervi, two and a half miles beyond Quinto, was a fashionable international resort before the First World War, and even to-day its grandeur confers on it a certain nostalgic charm and spaciousness. Under its palm trees congregated German barons, Austrian countesses and Russian nobles to lead the leisurely kind of life described by Marie Bartschkeff in her memoirs. Entire families would come to such places for three or four months at a time, bringing with them retinues of nurses, couriers and ladies' maids.

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They would revel in the Mediterranean sunshine, in the scenery and in the picturesque charm of the peasantry. Inveterate sightseers, they would explore every nook and cranny of the countryside and go home loaded with curios and mementoes of all kinds.

I can write rather feelingly about these people, for it was precisely in this manner that I was taken globe-trotting in my early childhood. My father considered that not less than four weeks was required to see Berne in all its aspects and we were made to visit most of its monuments no less than three times. Even now I have a very clear memory of what they are like.

To-day Nervi remains an attractive place with all the amenities of the best Riviera resorts, and the hillside behind it is as rustic as ever. Moreover, Genoa is only a few minutes away by train or bus so that here it is possible to combine a business trip with a seaside holiday.

The Rome express darts in and out of over a hundred tunnels by the time it gets to Spezia, thus the traveller only catches fleeting glimpses of rocky bays and inlets, tiny fishing ports ringed round with white houses as he gazes out of his carriage window. It is at the same time delightful and exasperating, for when something really pleasing appears, the train plunges once more into darkness. The railway has one advantage over the road, for it hugs the shore all the way along the coast. The highway follows the contours of the land, rising and falling with great frequency, and presents entirely different perspectives. Of the two alternatives, I scarcely know which I prefer, but perhaps the eighteenth-century method was the best of all. What could be more enchanting than to sail in a small boat close inshore, and to break one's journey for the night at Portofino or Sestri Levante? True, violent storms arise with great suddenness, but who cares when they can be so easily avoided by making for one of the many little harbours of this riviera?

The main road by-passes Bogliasco and Sori, two growing villages, the second of which is set at the mouth of a small valley. Here, as at Nervi, the mountains rise steeply from the coast in tiers to a height of nearly three thousand feet. From one of them, Monte Fasce, it is claimed that on a clear day it is possible to see some of the higher peaks of the Alps. I have never faced up to this climb which takes, perhaps, three or four hours. The light in Liguria has a fine quality, but distant prospects are often screened by a faint haze, especially after noon.

Recco, the next place, has one or two arcaded streets and some picturesque corners. Like most of the resorts between Genoa and Ruta on the summit of the Portofino Peninsula, it was at one time mainly frequented by Germans, but these traditions have more or less disappeared. Fashions in tourism change from year to year and wise people do not follow them too closely, if they wish to avoid crowding, high prices and discomfort.

Shortly after this point, the road branches to the left away from the sea to ascend the slopes of the Portofino Peninsula, which is described by Baedeker as "an almost square promontory of hard tertiary conglomerate, with a rich flora, especially on its southern slopes."

A masterpiece of understatement, but it is followed by all those essential details which we really want to know. It may be easy to carp at the prosaic guide books, but no one has succeeded in surpassing their accuracy and the amount of ground they cover. Their taste is perhaps a shade conservative, but then so is that of the vast majority of the travelling public. The Romantic Movement has left an impression that is hard to eradicate, even if it were desirable to do so. If there are thousands who find great pleasure in the sophistication of Baroque architecture, and riotous decoration of Rococo, there are millions who still revel in picturesqueness, in quaint corners, half-timber and second-rate Gothic churches. It is, I suppose, mainly a question of personal preferences and of training. Our eighteenth-century ancestors loathed mediaeval art and wild mountainous scenery. They came in their hundreds to see Classical Italy, and faced untold discomforts and even greater peril to do so. I am referring here to the aristocrats who did the Grand Tour. Apart from them, there were the countless pilgrims, who for centuries, had toiled on foot by rocky mountainous tracks, in the great heat or in the bitter cold to visit the home of Christianity. They lodged in rough wayside inns and in peasants' cottages, and were received with that gracious hospitality which is one of the greatest charms of the Italians.

Beyond Ruta, however, until the nineteenth century, the road was almost impassable for horse transport, and anyway it is very steep. The wary voyager shipped his barouche at Genoa or Marseilles to land more often than not at Civita Vecchia and thus avoid the hardships of the highway, the primitive fare of the taverns and the deadly marsh fevers of the Maremma. How Roman Legions and

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Carthaginian armies marched up and down this coast and with such speed I have never been able to fathom. Before railways were constructed, the journey by coach from Rome to Paris took just on a month. When a horseman did the trip in ten days he was held to have broken all previous records.

If communications in Italy have always been hampered by natural obstacles, these very same difficulties have helped to preserve regional characteristics and to prevent some beauty spots from being over commercialized. For instance, Camogli, in spite of its proximity to Genoa, has remained unspoiled because it is not crossed by the *Via Aurelia*, the main route to the south, and is only accessible by the coast road from Recco, which comes to a full stop a little farther on.

This small town is a painter's paradise, a port full of fishing boats and coasting schooners with brightly tinted sails. There are lofty old houses washed in pink, primrose or white, narrow streets going steeply down to the waterside, sometimes with steps and communicating with archways, and arcaded pavements. There is an ancient castle on the shore, and next to it rises the inevitable Ligurian belfry with its tiny cupola. The washing is hung like banners across the shadowed alleys, or gleams in the sunlight from balconies. On patches of shingle brown nets are spread out to dry between the small craft which are painted in brilliant colours.

At the far end of the town, paths lead upward through lemon groves and olive orchards to *Ruta*, and farther to the west to *Portofino Kulm*, the resort on the heights so beloved of Germans in the past. Beyond it the *Monte Telegrafo*, just on two thousand feet high, has one of the finest panoramas of the coast. If the light is favourable, the peaks of *Corsica*, the point of *Porto Venere* near *Spezia*, the hills above *Alassio*, can all be seen in one sweeping glance, as well as the vast curve of the *Apennines* along the coast. The vegetation here is dark green with pines and aromatic bushes which stand out in clear relief against the fiery red of the rocks and cliffs. In the winter and in early spring, many of the mountains are covered with snow, reddened towards dusk by the setting sun. If the twilight here is shorter than in northern countries it has its brief moment of glory. The sea turns from its rather harsh blue to deeper tints or at times even to a glaucous green. When night falls it shimmers in the radiance of the moon and froths in phosphorescent jets of fire.

Since there is no road along the coast of the promontory owing

to the steepness of the precipitous slopes, access to the Monastery of San Fruttuoso on its western shore is impossible by car. The simplest way to go there is by small paths from Camogli or Portofino which are about the same distance from it. Another alternative is to go by boat from either of these places, or better still to work the whole way round the peninsula. In any case both routes are attractive.

If you leave Camogli you pass Porto Pidocchio, a little fishing port that is so tiny that it is not even marked on the map or referred to in current guide books.

After passing the Punta della Chiappa, the scenery becomes rather desolate for the ground is so rugged that there are no houses in sight. A few hundred yards farther along a small bay, called the Cala d'Oro, is sometimes used for camping, and I am told, on occasion, by nudist bathers.

On the next little rocky cape there is a watch tower, built like so many others in the past, on the Mediterranean as a protection against raids by the Berber Corsairs.

At the farther end of the next inlet, and almost at the water's edge, the little Monastery of San Fruttuoso stands out against a sloping background of olive trees and umbrella pines, with a squat cupolaed belfry rising from its slate roofs. In its immediate vicinity there are about a dozen peasants' houses. On the walls and rocks brown nets dry in the sunshine.

This remains a place of unsurpassed beauty because of the charm of its setting and its simple effective architecture. Unfortunately crowded on Sundays and public holidays, it is best seen in the early hours of the morning before the trippers have arrived.

The village tavern, the Osteria Unica, has kept its original form, but the landlord has built on an annex where meals and drinks are served on a terrace. In the old bar there is a coloured lithograph of an English troopship which caught alight near here in a storm. Since she was carrying reinforcements to the Crimea and was fully loaded, there was considerable loss of life, but it would have been greater had it not been for the courage of two sisters from San Fruttuoso named Maria and Caterina Avegno. As all their menfolk were away fishing or on the high seas, they put out in a small boat and brought in a number of the unfortunate British soldiers. History does not relate whether they were suitably rewarded for their heroism, but it is to be hoped so.

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Land on this rocky slope is so scarce that the villagers are hard put to it to make a living. The tradition is that the male part of the population should serve in the Italian navy or on the splendid liners that berth at Genoa, but vacancies are not always to be found. Fishing is an uncertain business, and all the catch has to be taken by sea to Camogli or Portofino, and there is plenty of competition. Altogether there are some fifty men, women and children whose ancestors have lived here since the founding of the monastery in the fifth century by monks who were fleeing before the Barbarian invaders of the Roman Empire. According to the legend they came from Spain, bringing with them the bones of their patron saint.

They were guided to this spot by an angel and they came to it through a great tempest. As they reached the bay, three lions came out of the undergrowth and guided their steps to the spring near which they were to construct their new home. To add to these miracles, no sooner had the saintly men landed than a huge dragon which had terrorized the surrounding countryside leapt into the sea and vanished for ever. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the Abbots of San Fruttuoso grew in wealth and prestige and that they exercised their sway for miles around.

In the twelfth century one of the Dorias was given preferment of this rich abbey, and so for nearly two hundred years the heads of the family were buried in its vaults. All of them were admirals, and the last was a commander who participated in the final defeat of the Pisans at Meloria. Their bodies were brought by sea from Genoa in boats that passed under the archways at the base of the monastery.

The simple tombs are set against the walls of the crypt, each one in a gothic alcove of black-and-white marble supported on four small slender columns. The bare austerity of this place of sepulchre is highly impressive and symbolic of the frugal heroic people whom it commemorates.

Just above it is a primitive cloister of an earlier date. This part of the structure is whitewashed, and the sun streams down on the tiny courtyard where lacemakers are at work. The arches here are round and they rest on stumpy worn pillars devoid of all decoration. On the next story there is a gallery from which there is access to the square and to the church which has no outstanding merits.

In spite of the tourists the little community at San Fruttuoso appears to have kept its rustic character and, like thousands of such

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places in Italy, the villagers do their best to remain self-sufficient economically. The men not only make their own nets but they colour them brown with a dye that they extract from the bark of oak trees. The school is in an old watch tower, and the schoolmistress herself lives on the top floor, for she has no more than a dozen children to teach. In the nineteenth century this hamlet must have been very isolated, but before the coast roads were constructed many a seafarer called in at the shrine to offer up a prayer for safety.

IV

RAPALLO AND PORTOFINO

*Rapallo past and present. The shrine of Montallegro. Santa Margherita
Ligure. Portofino.*

THE TWIN cities of Rapallo and Santa Margherita are only separated from each other by a small promontory, and yet they are as different from each other as Cannes and Nice and the place they hold on the Riviera di Levante, is approximately the same. Rapallo is sophisticated and smart and Santa Margherita is less expensive and more frequented by the populace of Genoa and other big cities.

This comparison, like most others, is apt to be misleading. Neither of these resorts aspires to give its visitors the bright smartness of the Cote d'Azur, for they have remained essentially Italian in character and have preserved the simple good taste which is one of the chief charms of this country.

The climate is mild, cool in summer with fresh breezes in the evening, and warm in winter. Hardy northerners like the British and the Germans continue to bathe until the end of October, though the locals do not venture into the sea unless the temperature is really high. Why should they when they live here all the year and have no need to indulge in spartan adventures?

Originally places like Rapallo were frequented by foreigners, who came here to escape the bleakness and cold of their own countries. Many established themselves here permanently. Among them were distinguished painters and musicians and men of letters like Max Beerbohm and Gordon Graig who resided in this district between the two world wars. Here they could live quietly and spaciouly in beautiful scenery with sufficient urban amenities for their comfort. Communications with Rome, Paris and London are excellent and

there was congenial company to be had, so what more could man want?

Along the coast, and up the hillsides, are scattered villas of all sizes with splendid views and lovely gardens where a creative artist can work in peace, if he does not let himself be distracted by the sun, the flowers and the warmth. That, to my mind, is the chief danger of living in Italy.

The extra helping at lunch, the second glass of wine, and the afternoon is gone, pleurably if you wish, but without tangible results.

This *dolce far niente* attitude to duty is not shared by the Ligurians, least of all by the people of these parts who are an industrious lot, toughened perhaps by vicissitudes of the past, by the passage of invading armies and fleets, by pirate raids and local dissensions.

Rapallo is assuredly of the greatest antiquity. According to tradition, a very mediaeval looking fragment of bridge jealously preserved in the centre of the town was built by Hannibal. It seems unlikely, but the Carthaginians did undoubtedly march this way, and so did the Romans, the troops of Belisarius, the Goths, the Lombards and hosts of others, plundering and raping, drinking up all the wine, taking away the stores of corn and imposing on the populace all the hardships that soldiers have brought with them since the beginning of time.

Eventually the coast road built for the Imperial legions crumbled away, its broken bridges were unrepaired and in this region, as elsewhere on the peninsula, there arose a number of small states, accessible only by sea. So for a while Rapallo became a maritime republic. Alliance with Genoa led to absorption and lessened prosperity, but like all other Italian cities of the Middle Ages the people of this town were a prey to faction. There were the usual dissensions between Guelf and Ghibelline, the feuds between families that lasted centuries, and yet Rapallo survived and has kept some of its ancient aspect. Most of the old fortifications have been pulled down, but there is an ancient castle on the foreshore which adds to the charm of the view though the interior contains nothing of any particular interest. One of the old gates, the Porta Saline at the end of the Via Cairoli, is topped on the inner side by a painted Baroque shrine.

In the southern section of the city there are a number of narrow streets without sidewalks, like those of Siena and other places in

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Tuscany. Here and there are mansions faced with black-and-white marble which were formerly palaces of the nobility.

Architecturally, Rapallo has no outstanding features beyond a few pleasant arcades and painted buildings, and one or two carved gateways. It has, however, preserved an intimacy and movement which gives it life. It is something more than a resort, for the inhabitants continue to lead an existence that is independent of the tourist and casual visitor. Women sit at their doorsteps making the lace which is one of their local industries. In the back of some of the smaller shops, craftsmen are at work making the goods that they sell, though these, I am afraid, are doomed to extinction by the mass production of Milan, Turin and Genoa.

It is a pity. Until recently, one of the delights of Italy was that it was possible to have everything made to order and at a reasonable price. It was not merely a question of getting shoes and shirts to measure, even furniture, glass and china could be obtained on order and to almost any specifications. Industrialization is, I suppose, inevitable, but the skill of the artisan is a valuable commercial and artistic asset which should not be allowed to disappear.

Old customs are dying out rapidly, but one of the confraternities of the Middle Ages continues to have a few adherents among the local peasants. Originally the *Disciplinati di Gesu Christo* were a sect of flagellants whose members used to parade through cities lashing themselves unceasingly to expiate their sins or the sins of others. At one time women also used to participate in these strange manifestations, but the Church intervened and the public demonstrations of this form of penance were forbidden.

Later on, the *Disciplinati* became a sort of charitable institution, and to this day the brothers bear the dead of their association to the grave free of charge, and others for only a very small fee. On such occasions they wear black gowns with cowls which they pull right down over their faces so that no one may recognize them. At night they carry huge torches and as they pass through the dark streets they present a rather imposing spectacle. In Easter Week they take part in the usual processions wearing ritual garb and carrying skulls in their hands.

The churches of Rapallo call for no particular attention beyond the fact that they are typical of Liguria and conform to the familiar pattern brought into this part of Italy by Lombard architects. The

belfries are usually of the same design, but since they fit in with the landscape, and the red tiled roofs of the houses, there is no need to strain for originality.

In towns such as this religion is still a vital factor with the bulk of the population who have not been caught by the materialism of the industrial regions. Mass is well attended, and there is sometimes a naïve attitude to things of the spirit which seems to me to be admirable. So, for instance, the last time that I passed this way, the walls of nearly every building were plastered with signs on which were printed in large letters:

“LONG LIVE THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION”

No blasphemy was intended or felt at this curious way of celebrating one of the year's greatest feast days, though one might interpret it as a puritanical reaction to the traditional Italian attachment to the sins of the flesh.

This is but one side of Rapallo. There is also the cosmopolitan resort of great hotels set in gardens, lush with semi-tropical vegetation where visitors set out every morning for the golf course and play bridge every night. That at any rate, is the impression they make on me. I may of course be wrong.

From nearly everywhere close to the sea there is the prospect of the bay, the headland with its villas and the promontory of Portofino. At the back the green slopes of the mountains form a screen from the biting east wind which chills one to the marrow in winter. The spectacle is varied by the changing light throughout the day and the white sails of the yachts and the darker ones of the fishing craft.

On the front, the cafés and restaurants are brightly lit up in the evening, and the diners can watch the strollers walking up and down on the pavement near their tables. There is, as always, in Italian resorts, a tinkle of music in the background, but no singing. The Ligurians are not particularly musical and few of them become composers or operatic stars.

Superficially the scene and setting are typical of almost any place of the same type on the shores of the Mediterranean, but the landscape of the Gulf of Tigulio is of outstanding beauty.

Being averse to strenuous exercise, I took the cable car up to Montallegro, the shrine, situated two thousand feet up at the back of the city. As means of transport the *funavia* is unsurpassed. In a

few minutes one is wafted from the heat of sea level to the relative coolness on the heights. After passing over a few rather urban villas and gardens, the real country begins. There are peasants' cottages washed in pinks and ochres, vineyards and orchards. This cultivation in its turn gives way to chestnut and mountain oak, the vegetation on all the slopes of the Apennines.

If the other passengers are Italians, conversation in the small compartment becomes general. In the short spell of time available, all confidences are exchanged, everyone reveals his family history and expects the same frankness from his neighbours.

On my last trip, I was penned up in one corner with a working-class family from Volterra, and they were delighted because they thought that I was a fellow Tuscan. I had to admit that I was English but they still welcomed me with open arms.

They declared that they liked Rapallo but they could not stand the Ligurians. To begin with they could not understand their dialect and anyway these cursed northerners were so cold, taciturn and reticent that it would not make any difference if they did.

We had just started exchanging experiences with plenty of Rabelaisian embellishments when the car came to a sudden stop. My new friends had to lead away their children to a quiet corner because the emotion of the trip had been too much for them.

Ordering an *espresso*, the strong black coffee that is unfailingly good, I settled down at a table on the terrace of a rustic café. Yet another view, but one of the best in this region. From here can be seen the whole of the gulf down to the small peninsula of Sestri Levante. As usual, there are claims that on the right day it is possible to see Corsica and Capraia but I have never been fortunate in this respect.

Just below are the rooftops of Rapallo, then a patch of greenery, broken here and there by the towers and battlements of two or three bogus castles at San Michele di Pagana, and beyond the curve of the Bay of Santa Margherita and the masts of the coastal shipping in the harbour.

To one side, a really rustic valley of chestnut woods, small farms and countless villages, each one grouped round the tall domed campanile and with tracks picked out by solemn processions of dark green cypresses. With all the haunting beauty of this country it is not surprising that the Italian emigrant so frequently hurries home—

ward, as soon as he has saved enough to buy the patch of land that will supply his simple needs for the rest of his life. Others are more ambitious and wait until they have made comfortable fortunes so that on their return they can build large villas and impress the companions of their humble youth.

The shrine at Montallegro is celebrated throughout Liguria and attracts many pilgrims since it owes its existence to an unusual miracle.

In the sixteenth century, a peasant who was passing this way after having been to market, had a splendid vision. He saw the Virgin in person, and she gave him a picture of her Ascension to Heaven which she placed in his hands. When she left him, water began to well up from the ground at his feet, though previously there had been no signs of a spring.

The wonders did not cease at this point. The countryman took the gift down to Rapallo, but it vanished and reappeared at the place he had received it. So often did this occur that at last it was decided to build a shrine on the site of the miracles. This was done with infinite toil by the villagers of the surrounding valleys. The church they constructed still stands, filled with the votive offerings of the faithful who have found comfort and healing there.

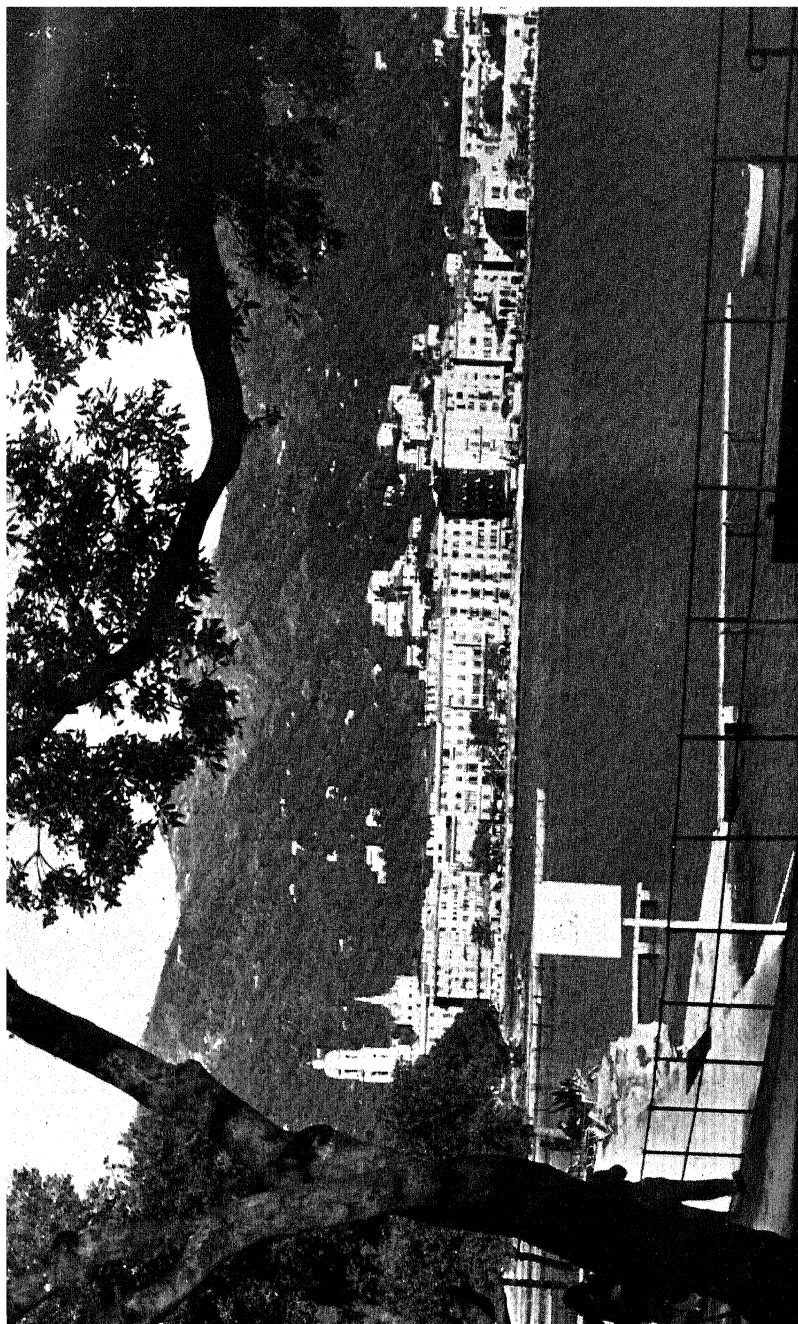
The picture, a small ikon of the late Byzantine school, was claimed by the crew of a ship from Ragusa that came to Montallegro only a few years after the peasant had seen the apparition. They declared that it was one that had vanished from a chapel in their native town and asked for it to be returned.

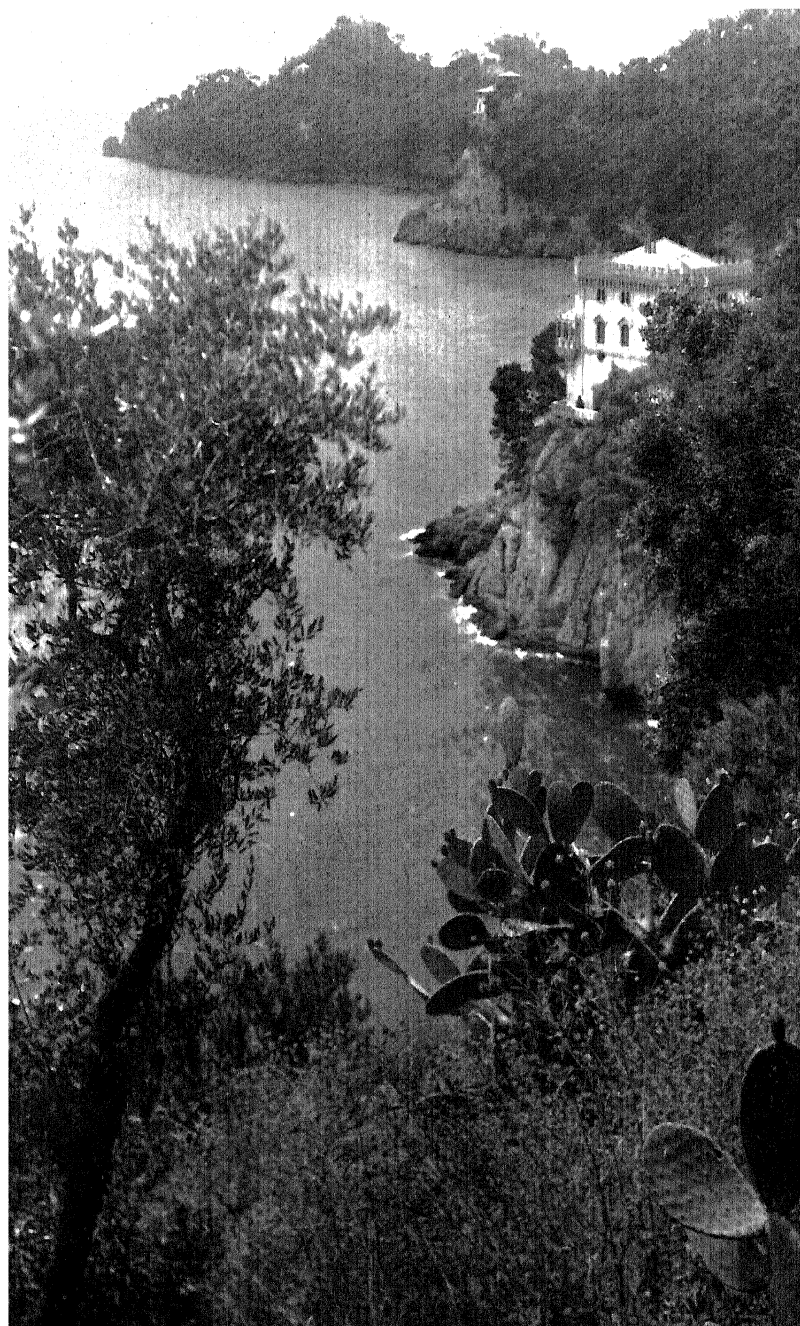
The Court of the Genoese decided in their favour, but once again the picture disappeared and was found in its present resting place on the mountainside.

A strange and unusual story, even in the land of saints and miracles, it is confirmed by a very solid mass of evidence which does not rest on the testimony of a single witness.

When I got back to Rapallo after my last pilgrimage, I set out almost at once for Santa Margherita to dine at one of the fishermen's taverns near the port. The road follows the shore for a while then turns up over a rise to come down to the small sandy beach of San Michele di Pagana, where there are one or two restaurants and trattoria with terraces overlooking the sea.

Another rise and then a second dip brings one to Santa Mar-





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gherita where the atmosphere is rather more popular than at Rapallo. There is a promenade with palm trees and hotels, a town of no great character, but the prospect here is southwards towards Sestri Levante with its jutting peninsula.

Owing to the proximity of Genoa, many of the old eating places had been dolled up with a corresponding increase in prices and fall in the quality of the food. Fortunately on the far side of the harbour there are one or two little taverns which cater for the crews of the schooners that bring wine from Sardinia and Elba, but they take some finding.

I dined there on cold ham and peaches, a dish of *gambere*, prawns shelled and fried, and a slab of parmesan, unsurpassed as a cheese as well as a flavouring. The draught white wine from the local vineyards was of the best and quite unprocurable in most of the smarter establishments of the district.

I tried to contact some of the skippers of the port but had no luck. Nowadays they are too prosperous to wish to take passengers on a paying basis, but once friendly relations are established it is sometimes possible to get taken by sea to Elba, the Tuscan Islands, Sardinia or even Sicily. Many of the sailors have served on merchantmen and quite a number of them speak English.

A voyage of this kind should be worth making. Seen from close by on a sailing ship the Tyrrhenian is full of surprises. In the summer-time, there are drifting turtle and small whales which spout lazily on the surface of the water. Land is rarely out of sight and the hazard of trade may carry one to all sorts of enchanting and inaccessible places.

As seamen, the Italians may or may not live up to their past when the men from these shores discovered the Canary Islands, the West Indies and the mainland of America, but they are courteous and entertaining companions. Like the rich peasants they have a sound appreciation of good food and drink. If the accommodation is limited you sleep on deck, provided of course that it is warm enough.

Unfortunately the Mediterranean is not always calm, even in summer. Storms arise quickly and can take a long time to subside, as I have found more than once to my cost.

If Santa Margherita is a pleasant enough place for a holiday, its inhabitants are, in the main, too reticent to be adepts at the art of conversation. Unlike the Florentines who are inquisitive and scandal-

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mind, they are not interested in gossip. A virtue undoubtedly, but not one that makes for the exchange of ideas and information.

When a foreigner has spent three or four days in a Tuscan city the whole of the population has been posted about his income, his qualities and defects, the contents of his luggage and the motive for his journey. A week later the improvisations about his vices begin. No one takes them seriously, but they are listened to, as some people read books, with a keen appreciation of the creativeness and the imagination of the authors.

The only road to Portofino starts from Santa Margherita, and though it is just over three miles long it is certainly one of the most beautiful in the world. It was built by Napoleon, presumably for military purposes, but it was left unfinished. Now, thank God, the Italian Department of Fine Arts has taken this strip of coast under its protection. No houses may be erected, no structures altered without authorization and so the character of the scenery and of the shore is preserved from commercialization and building development. The hideous posters and advertisements which spoil many a highway have been banned.

The road winds in and out past rocky inlets and coves where the dark red sandstone contrasts with the deep blue of the sea, the green of the vegetation and the paler green of the olives and umbrella pines.

On a high headland, the monastery of Cervara is of modern aspect though it dates from the fourteenth century. Although much restored, its cloisters of rounded arches have survived the hand of the renovator and enclose a charming garden. In the past this abbey housed the travellers whose ships stopped in the bay for the night, since even galley slaves had to be allowed to rest. In turn, came Popes and Monarchs, including the Emperor Maximilian and Francis I of France, captured after his disastrous defeat at Pavia in 1525, besides a host of other voyagers.

At Paraggi a few houses and inns are set on the edge of a sandy bay with trees around it. On either side the bushes and flowers come right down to the water's edge. At the back there is a framework of hills covered with dense woods. The sea and the light are very clear, but as a rule it is never unduly hot here.

For the next mile and a half the road continues to curve and bend round rocky promontories and inlets, passing fine villas half screened

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by foliage and a wealth of blossom of all kinds, purple, crimson and white. They are above on the slope, or below near the shore.

When Portofino is reached the presence of the village is at first scarcely noticeable because of its position round the deep-set little harbour. First of all there are houses on the west side of the highway intersected by narrow passages and stairs that lead down to the stone dock, then comes the church in a large and usually half-empty square.

A short street gives access to the Piazza which faces the bay. From the terraces of the cafés and restaurants one gets a prospect of the Gulf of Rapallo, and nearer by, of the yachts and fishing boats at their moorings. Along the water's edge there are painted houses, some with arcades. Outwardly they have not changed, but most of them have been modernized and superbly furnished, and let at colossal rents. Portofino, like Capri, has become the resort of millionaires and film stars, but nothing can destroy its charm, the quaintness of its buildings and the incomparable natural beauty now that it is protected from desecration by the Italian Government.

In a sense it has been commercialized but in a highly civilized manner. In the former sailors' taverns, the service and food are superb. White-jacketed waiters shake cocktails for fashionable crowds of cosmopolitans in an atmosphere that combines sophistication and simplicity. There is movement and gaiety, and yet only a few yards away the olive trees and vineyards are crossed by the path that leads to San Fruttuoso.

On the far side of the harbour the roadway comes to a sudden stop by the stone jetty. Beyond, the promontory narrows down to broaden out into a small peninsula.

On the wooded heights above stands a splendid villa that once belonged to Lady Carnavon, and near to it a mediaeval castle in extensive grounds. Still farther on, the ancient church of St. Giorgio is a famed centre of pilgrimage because it is believed to be the burial place of England's patron saint.

V

THE ROMAN ROAD TO SPEZIA

Zoagli. Chiavari. Sestri Levante. Levanto. I Cinque Terre. Porto Venere.

BEYOND RAPALLO the road rises up steeply, with twists and turns. At each bend the view changes. Now there is a sudden glimpse of the sea far below, later the Portofino promontory can be seen across the bay or, to the south, the peninsula of Sestri Levante. Then again, and perhaps quite unexpectedly, the slopes and peaks of the Apennines come into the range of vision. By car progress is bewildering, if not hazardous, for there is plenty of traffic and the Italians, being skilled mountain drivers, go at break-neck speeds. There are huge lorries with trailers, motor coaches and limousines, and yet the fairway is a narrow one with a precipitous drop on one side. But I have never seen an accident on this route. I have passed along it laboriously on foot, stopping perhaps a shade too often for a glass of wine at the peasants' *cantinas*. I have been penned up in crowded local buses or lolled back luxuriously in comfortable Pullman buses or private cars. Vehicles whizz past each other with only inches or millimetres to spare but never collide.

Zoagli, the first place on this run, is situated in a narrow valley, below the main road. At one time a tiny fishing village of narrow alleys and painted houses, the whole of the centre was destroyed by bombing during the Second World War. It has been rebuilt, but much of its ancient character has disappeared. However, its small pine-fringed beach and the wild beauty of the surrounding rocks and cliffs still attract visitors. Here, as at Rapallo, the women work at home on their looms to make velvet and handwoven silks of fine texture which can be bought locally. At one time it looked as if this industry would disappear, but it has survived, thanks largely to passing tourists.

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A mile or so farther on the plain which stretches from Chiavari to Sestri comes into view. At the near end of this first city, there is an architectural freak dating from Mussolini's time. It is the former Fascio built in the shape of the party badge, and showing some signs of delapidation. There were many of its design in other parts of Italy, but most of them were demolished or blown up when the Duce fell. This one has been allowed to survive presumably as a warning to potential dictators, for it has little or nothing to recommend it aesthetically.

Chiavari, a small manufacturing town and shipbuilding centre, is a rather unpretentious looking place, especially after the glitter of Rapallo and Santa Margherita. It has modern suburbs with avenues lined with oleanders and cool arcaded streets in the centre. Being at the mouth of a broad and fertile valley, it is usually crowded with peasants and farmers who come here to market their produce.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, organ grinders from this place used to go to all parts of Europe and, in particular, to Great Britain. Later Naples became the chief recruiting ground for these musicians and for the ubiquitous ice-cream mongers.

Quite unobtrusively, Chiavari is a seaside resort, frequented mainly by people of very modest means who come here with their families. Apart from this its only claim to fame is that it was the home of Garibaldi's ancestors for several centuries.

Two miles inland, up the valley of the Entella, at San Salvatore, stands a palace which formerly belonged to the Fieschi, Genoese nobles, of whom one became Pope Innocent IV.

Still farther to the east, the mountains rise to a height of nearly six thousand feet, and there are one or two villages frequented by the local populace as winter sports' resorts when conditions are favourable. In the summertime they are cool and pleasant, for places like Santa del Taro are at an altitude of over two thousand feet.

After Chiavari the road hugs the coast and continues to be level right up to Sestri Levante. At Lavagna there are some small shipyards but nothing else of interest.

Sestri Levante itself is situated on the narrow neck of a small peninsula. In the past it was much frequented by Germans, including Richard Wagner who wrote most enthusiastically about the beauty of its situation.

It is often mentioned in eighteenth-century diaries, for travellers

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going southwards from Genoa by felucca or galley used to make it a port of call. It has a faintly nostalgic charm, because of its handful of old mansions set in large gardens, and one or two rows of ancient houses giving on to a sandy beach. On the headland beyond the isthmus there is a much restored castle with a fine view northwards towards Portofino and the Bay of Rapallo.

For nearly thirty miles the main road to Spezia branches inland, whilst the railway line continues to follow the shore, but through an endless succession of tunnels. Access to most of the smaller seaside resorts is by slow trains, which are, to say the least of it, a rather leisurely method of transport.

Moneglia, the first of these places, has two fine old castles. Bonassola, a little farther on, has a sandy beach and is a clean, bright little village with well-kept houses and small inns of the type that I should chose for a long stay, to write a book in the intervals of bathing and boating.

Levanto is a small, quiet town, completely free from that curse of modern times, the rush of through traffic, for it is situated about ten miles away from the highway to Spezia in a cul de sac. There is no road along the coast at the present time.

When I got out of the train, after a very deliberate journey in an extremely crowded third-class compartment of ancient vintage, I found myself in a place that had, to all appearances, avoided the events of the last thirty years. It is true that the station, destroyed by a direct hit in 1944, had been rebuilt, but apart from that I might have found myself back in the days of Edward the Peacemaker.

I was well received. The local population, accustomed to welcoming generations of retired Anglo-Indian colonels, and English-speaking men of letters, was eager to show me their home town. I was informed that nowhere else on the Riviera di Levante would I find such a good climate, such glorious sunsets and such attractive scenery. A steward of the Italian Lines on holiday offered to pilot me round, and I was glad to accept his guidance and be introduced to the district. In two or three years' time he hoped to give up his job. He wanted to build himself a house and remain in Levanto for the rest of his life.

He told me that before the war the English used to come here for six or seven months at a time. They found living cheap and the men liked the wine. A local vintage called Sciachetra is made with half-

dried grapes and is almost as strong as whisky and about a tenth of the price. It is something like a white port, amber in colour and inclined to be sweet.

Since it was a hot day I hastily refused an offer to sample this attractive drink and we set off on our tour of exploration.

Levanto lies at the mouth of a wide valley which opens out on to a sandy bay with rocky headlands at either side. As a concession to the spirit of the modern age there is a small casino with an excellent swimming pool.

On a hill nearby stands a castle which must have formed part of the original fortifications constructed to keep the Corsairs away, for invasion by land must have been almost impossible owing to the difficulties of transport.

One or two of the old gates are still in existence as well as some sections of the ramparts. The Cathedral of S. Andrea, built in the thirteenth century, has kept its simple but well-designed Pisan façade, but the interior is of a somewhat later date. In the treasury there is a gold chalice presented by Henry VIII of England to a noble of the town named Da Passano with whom he had had a wager.

The fourteenth-century town hall has survived and some of the mediaeval streets and alleys. On an eminence a Franciscan monastery of no outstanding architectural features contains a square, surrounded by cypresses, from which there is a view of the bay and the rooftops of Levanto.

Never a fashionable resort in the accepted sense of the word, this place has always been popular with people in search of quiet. Mussolini spent a few weeks here before the March on Rome, possibly to make his final plans to impose himself as ruler of his country.

Since the coast to Spezia is inaccessible by road, it has remained primitive, and is even less frequented than it was before the days of motor transport. The *Cinque Terre*, five small fishing ports, have, up to date, no modern hotels and restaurants. As they have no wide sandy beaches it is unlikely that they will ever attract crowds and will remain a paradise for painters and writers who are prepared to put up at simple inns in rustic conditions. Scenically, they are delightful. From each of them there are extensive views along the coast and every one has its own individuality.

Monterosso al Mare is on a bay and has a ruined castle standing on a small promontory. The hills behind it are two to three thousand

feet high and are accessible by steep paths that pass through vineyards and orchards.

Vernazza surrounds a small cove, on one side of which the parish church rises sheer out of the sea. On the other, there are houses built on the stone dock and, above them, some terraces and remains of ancient fortifications.

Corniglia and Manorola have much the same characteristics, vines growing on steep slopes and groves of oranges, lemons and peach trees.

The *Cinque Terre* wines are noted throughout eastern Liguria because of their strength and quality, but they are at present unobtainable in other parts of Italy, and rarely if ever on sale at first-class hotels and restaurants.

Beyond Manarola, or to be precise the adjoining Riomaggiore, there are a few hamlets which can only be reached by boat or by climbing down to them through very difficult country. They are rather too isolated for a prolonged stay, even if one solved the rather difficult problem of finding accommodation.

The other five places that I have just described so briefly are within easy reach of Spezia or Levanto by *accelerato*, trains which stop at every station in spite of their name.

As I stated earlier on, the Via Aurelia, the road to the south, leaves the coast at Sestri Levante. It begins to ascend almost at once and continues to climb and wind up the steep slopes until it reaches a height of two thousand feet at Bracco Pass. At Baracca, where a road branches down to Levanto, there is a tavern with a primitive terrace and one or two bedrooms.

The view of the surrounding mountains is quite remarkable, but completely outstripped by the panorama a few miles farther on from the heights above Spezia. Just below, the large, almost landlocked bay, is surrounded by tiers of wooded hills. Far beyond the promontory of Lerici, on the far side, gleam the marble mountains of Carrara. In the early spring and in winter the loftiest of the surrounding peaks are snow-covered.

Spezia from nearby is a soulless modern city. Seen from above it is a place of enchantment. The colour-washed houses stand out clearly against the deep blue of the sea with its long line of docks and ships out at anchor.

After the Risorgimento, this place became Italy's principal naval

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base, with Taranto, and later Magdalena, north of Sardinia as part of the general system of defences. It consists of large naval arsenals, barracks and depots in addition to an ordinary commercial port. At one time Napoleon had considered creating here a large fortress on the lines of Toulon but the project was abandoned.

As the winter climate is very mild, Spezia was formerly much frequented by foreigners, but the expansion of the docks and the restrictions imposed in Mussolini's regime on movement in fortified areas tended to drive away tourists.

More recently the pleasant public parks and avenues near the sea have been developed to counteract the rather austere aspect of the inland quarters.

If the town is rather dull, in spite of its splendid situation, the gulf is one of the most beautiful natural harbours in the whole of Europe. It is nearly six miles in depth and over four miles broad, and surrounded on all sides by mountains. The south side stretches past the Bay of Lerici to the Punta di Maralunga. On the north side the coast is more indented and ends up at Porto Venere, beyond which is the Island of Palmaria and Islet of Tino.

An antiquated steamer plies daily from Spezia to Lerici and Porto Venere and across the gulf and will not, it is to be hoped, be replaced by swifter speedboats. From the deck of this craft an excellent view is to be had of the landscape. If you are in a hurry there are frequent services of motor buses by land, all too frequent, since they will tend to develop these charming little places.

There are two roads to Porto Venere. One runs along the shore rounding the huge arsenal, and then passes through the villages of Cadimare, Fezzano and Le Grazie, each of them of some attraction. The other, on a higher level, has views of the Apennines and the Apuan Alps in the far distance.

Porto Venere itself is a city of very ancient origin. It was used in Roman times as a port of call by galleys on their way to Gaul, and as a fortress by the Byzantine forces. Later it was annexed by the Genoese who constructed the old town and its fortifications, parts of which have since been pulled down though several towers have escaped destruction.

There are narrow streets and steep alleys with stairways, rows of tall houses facing the sea, with a quay on which are drawn up brightly painted boats in a riot of light and shade and colour. Over

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many arched doorways are to be seen bas-reliefs in stone or terra-cotta and small details of carving.

The Piazza Lazzaro Spallanzani at the far end of the town has a fine view of the Island of Palmaria.

Nearby, on a rock, the Church of San Pietro stands in front of the square of the same name. Three of its walls are believed to be part of the original sixth-century structure, the rest of it having been built by the Genoese in the twelfth century, with their characteristic use of black-and-white marble. After being in a state of great dilapidation for some hundreds of years, it was competently restored in 1930.

Below the church, in some rocks, at the entrance of a cavern, is an inscription to the effect that it was here that Lord Byron found his inspiration for his poem *The Corsair*, together with the reminder of his exploit in swimming across the bay from Lerici.

Higher up and farther back the Collegiate Church of San Lorenzo was also built by the Genoese in the twelfth century. Its foundations are laid on a wall of the Etruscan period, but it would seem to be rather too far north to have been constructed by them.

In the interior there is a curious font with remains of twelfth or thirteenth century carvings and, on the walls, some frescoes which are still faintly outlined. Of the numerous paintings, by far the best is an altar-piece attributed, and probably rightly, to Mino da Fiesole. If the detail of the building is only of fair interest, the general composition is excellent. With its fine stonework and vaulting, it is certainly one of the best examples of this particular type of architecture.

Continuing upwards from San Lorenzo through some rather quaint streets to the summit of the promontory, one reaches the foot of the castle of Porto Venere, which is on a rocky eminence. It is not a case here of a few ruined walls and towers, but of extensive fortifications on a large scale, again of Genoese construction, and dating from the fifteenth century. From the walls there is a view across the bay and out to the open sea.

As a structure, it is massive and functional, rather than decorative, for it was not intended to be the dwelling of a merchant prince, but to guard the lines of communication of a trading state and serve as the principal outpost on its southern boundary. Forts of this type were built by the Genoese in nearly all their colonies and trading stations. Unlike the Tuscans or the Venetians, they rarely, if ever, mixed business and pleasure and they were far too practical to lavish

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money on architectural display. Such was, and remains, the spirit of Liguria. Once its boundaries are crossed this austerity disappears and a greater feeling for the aesthetic is manifested in almost every aspect of life. Nevertheless, Porto Venere is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful places on the whole of the west coast, not only because of its scenery and unique setting but because it has scarcely changed in its essential features in the past four hundred years.

The heights of the Island of Palmaria are crowned by modern fortifications like those on most of the hills surrounding the Bay of Spezia and on the promontory nearby. On the coast there are a couple of grottoes which are said to have been used as dwellings in prehistoric times. Though such things do not interest everyone, they serve as a pretext for a boat trip round the island and on to the islet of Tino with its ruins of an eleventh-century abbey and of a castle. Still farther out to sea is the rock of Tinetto on which there are the remains of an early Christian hermitage.

On the other two islands there are quarries where convicts used to extract black marble of a fine quality, streaked with yellow and orange bands, and used for the decoration of churches in Porto Venere and even Genoa.

The west coast of the Porto Venere Peninsula is practically inaccessible by land. There are steep cliffs and craggy inlets which for the most part are completely deserted even in the summer season. In the late spring and early summer no one comes to disturb the peacefulness of this shore although it is not much more than nine miles from Spezia and the main line to Rome.

On the outskirts of Porto Venere there is a bathing beach and, near to it, some modern hotels and villas, but pleasant and simple inns and taverns are to be found in the old town which have all the amenities that a seasoned traveller can require. The locals here are courteous and friendly. Many of the men have served on warships or in the merchant navy and speak a certain amount of English. They are really well disposed to be helpful to foreigners provided that they are treated with reasonable politeness. Like all Italians they hate rudeness and are not prepared to put up with it. Southerners retaliate by putting prices up, but here in the north where charges are just as definitely fixed as anywhere else, people merely retire into their shells. Incidentally, just like Augustus Hare seventy-five years ago, I can claim that I have never been robbed or suffered extortions in Italy.

BY ITALIAN SHORES

I have always met with scrupulous honesty and even frequently with great generosity and kindness. Those who complain of their unfortunate experiences have usually asked for trouble by a display of bad manners and suspiciousness.

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VI

LERICI AND THE CARRARA MOUNTAINS

San Terenzo and the Shelleys. Lerici. Fiascherino. Sarzana. Carrara.

AFTER SKIRTING the commercial port of Spezia, some shipyards and works of different kinds, the road finally turns into the Bay of Lerici, just as interesting in its way as Porto Venere.

For some obscure reason that I have never fathomed, the light and the colouring of the sea here have a brightness which is quite unusual even for the Mediterranean. The land is less steep, and is covered in most places with vineyards, olive orchards, cypresses and umbrella pines, and the vegetation comes down to within a few yards of the sandy beach.

On the first headland a castle rises above the village of San Terenzo. On the second stands an old Pisan fortress which dominates the small town of Lerici.

The view here is of the Gulf of Spezia and the mountains that surround it. Four miles away the houses of Porto Venere can be seen quite clearly, and beyond them, the Island of Palmaria. Two or three hundred yards from the centre of Lerici the main road turns inland so that the bulk of the traffic is diverted.

This enchanting fishing port has always been popular with artists and men of letters but has never attracted tourists in thousands, presumably because it has not been widely publicized, though scenically it is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful places of the west coast of Italy. There are pleasant walks on the hillsides and by the sea, whilst the local architecture is more varied than in most parts of Liguria.

The castle follows a rather familiar pattern because it was rebuilt by the Genoese who captured it in the thirteenth century, after which Lerici remained in the possession of the republic. In spite of this, the

proximity of Tuscany and Florence has exercised a definite influence on the design of the churches and of the other buildings, and the atmosphere is of the centre rather than of the north of the peninsula. The cold austerity and bareness is replaced by a certain warmth and a feeling for ornamentation that is rather difficult to define.

There are the usual colour-washed houses with red tiled roofs, but the parish church is in the Baroque style of the sixteenth century.

Across the bay, just by the roadside, and only two or three hundred yards from San Terenzo, stands a white house with arcades on the ground floor. It is the Casa Magni which was occupied by the Shelleys, Lord Byron, the Williams and the ex-pirate John Trelawny in the summer of 1822.

Driven away from Pisa by the heat, the flies and the mosquitoes, they came here to bathe and especially to sail in the *Ariel*, the boat which Percy Shelley had had built for him by Captain Roberts. It was to serve also as a tender to the *Bolivar*, the yacht that Byron sold the following year to Lord Blessington in Genoa.

In the early nineteenth century accommodation must have been scarce in Lerici, for the Casa Magni had only four bedrooms and a large saloon that opened on to the terrace. The portico below was used for boats and nets and the road had not yet been built.

If the men liked swimming in the warm waters of the gulf and enjoyed the beauty of the scene, the party was not a happy one. Mary Shelley was querulous and discontented. She loathed their primitive quarters and the roughness of the population. She was inclined to be jealous of Jane Williams and horrified by the unconventional habits of her husband, especially when he came to meals stark naked. This state of affairs was not improved by the presence of Clare Clairmont, one of Byron's discarded mistresses and the mother of his child Allegra who had just died.

Trelawny fell in love with this woman who was not popular with the others, although they were disposed to commiserate with her in her sorrow. Temperamentally she had nothing in common with her stepsister, Mary Shelley, and her coming only helped to increase the general discord and uneasiness.

As it happened, the uncongenial atmosphere was darkened by a sense of imminent tragedy that was felt by most of the inmates of Casa Magni. Shelley was haunted by strange dreams which seemed to be prophetic. Like de Musset, he had visions of himself as a com-

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pletely separate personality with whom he could hold converse. On one occasion he saw the child Allegra surge up from the waters of the bay and beckon to him.

In spite of this the poet was undisturbed. He had never feared death and had done little to avoid it when his life was in danger. He set off in his yacht for Leghorn to meet the Hunts who were coming out to Italy at his request to found the *Liberal*, the periodical that was to be sponsored by Byron.

When the time came for the return journey, the *Bolivar*, which was to accompany them, was held up by the customs, and so the *Ariel* began her last fateful trip without the guiding hand of Trelawny who was an experienced sailor.

Although it was summer, Shelley and Williams had not been gone more than five hours when a violent storm broke out which lasted only half an hour, but the thunder continued to roar throughout the night. Days passed, but there was no news of the poet and his friend. None of the fishermen had seen their craft, and messengers who were sent out to patrol the coast returned to say that their errand had been a fruitless one.

Eventually a mutilated body was washed up on the beach at Viareggio which is midway between Leghorn and Lerici. Although the face was fleshless it was identified by a tattered copy of Keats's poems which Shelley had been in the habit of carrying in his coat. It was doubled back as if the poet, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away.

Another body, presumably that of Edward Williams, was found farther up the coast, and then, a few days later at a still greater distance, the remains of the boy Charles Vivian, who had been employed to complete the crew.

Many details of this tragic episode were recorded by Trelawny in his letters. He had known Shelley only a few months, but he had for him an admiration and affection which was near to adoration. In the circumstances it was, perhaps, just as well since it was he who undertook to break the news to both the widows and took charge of the funeral arrangements which were complicated by the Italian quarantine regulations. Later he wound up the households at Lerici and at Pisa and conducted Mary Shelley and her children to Albaro, not even forgetting to pick up the Hunts afterwards at Leghorn and to install them nearby.

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Close to the Casa Magni is the Villa Bibolini, a large house surrounded by extensive grounds. It was for some time the residence of the painter Arnold Böcklin, whose picture "The Island of the Dead" was very popular in some circles about forty years ago. This type of painting is out of fashion now, but in Edwardian times it could be seen in reproduction in hundreds of suburban drawing-rooms. To give the artist his due, he did succeed in recording something of the light and peculiarities of the local landscape, but in a manner rather reminiscent of the best technicolour films.

Beyond the small peninsula on which stand the Castle of Lerici, the southern arm of the Gulf of Spezia stretches another eight miles or so to the cape dominated by Monte Marcello. A secondary road goes to Fiascherino and Telaro. The first of these places is a small bathing resort, situated on a sandy bay and still unfrequented by foreigners, even though D. H. Lawrence described it "as the most beautiful place in the world" in one of his letters. I am almost inclined to agree with him. If I were free to go where I liked, I would gladly spend a few months there provided I had some work to occupy part of my time. Owing to its sheltered position, it enjoys a very mild climate. Lerici is only forty minutes' walk away, and the ancient steamer calls daily from Spezia and Porto Venere.

Telaro, rather less than a mile and a half away, is a small fishing village of houses perched on rocks or on steep slopes round a tiny creek.

On the heights above a secondary road leaves the Via Aurelia at Pugliola, about a mile inland from Lerici, and goes on to Monte Marcello. At Pugliola, the Villa Cochrane stands in extensive and magnificent gardens, which can on occasion be visited.

After Serra, the next village, the way along the ridge is desolate, and passes through groves of olive trees and umbrella pines. Monte Marcello, between six and seven miles on, is nearly nine hundred feet high and commands views on every side: to the north over the whole of the Gulf of Spezia as far as Lerici, and southwards overlooking the plain towards Viareggio and Pisa, with the Apuan Alps and the Carrara Mountains running parallel to it.

The road turns inland on the eastern slope of the headland and winds its way downwards to the picturesque village of Ameglia with its castle, to Bocca di Magra, a small port on the estuary of the river of the same name. Near to it, in the grounds of the Villa Fabbriotti,





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are the ruins of an ancient monastery which was the scene of the legendary encounter between Dante and the Capucin monk, Brother Ilarius. On the opposite bank of the Magra the Etruscan and Roman ruins of the city of Luni can be reached by a ferry.

There is yet another trip from Lerici which no one should miss, that is to take a rowing boat and go southwards to Telaro and beyond it. The coast is so rugged and varied that it is worth seeing from the sea and from close by, so as to get the varied effects of light and shade on the water and on the rocks. I could spend a whole day drifting along in the sun, putting ashore to get just the right kind of lunch at a country tavern. I would even risk the best of the local dishes, mussels stewed according to a recipe which I have never discovered, but certainly one of the most savoury of its category.

After a great many years of travelling in Italy I always feed at trattorie, although to use the words of a nineteenth-century guide book "they are frequented by the lower rank". The food is usually far better than in most restaurants and hotels, and you are more likely to get regional dishes and wines. Peasants and fishermen are inclined to be careful about what they eat and still more about what they drink, for the obvious reason that they are producers. It is not however an infallible rule, for it only applies in prosperous districts. South of Naples, for instance, rural cooking tends to be pretty bad. Round Rome it is a variable quantity, but in Tuscany and round Bologna it is almost always first rate.

After leaving Lerici and passing through Pugliola the road descends and crosses the Magra, in former times the northern boundary of Etruria. Beyond, stretches a long strip of plain at the foot of the Apuan Alps, the name given to this part of the coastal range of the Apennines. There are few ancient buildings on this sandy shore which was continually ravaged by raiders, at first by the Normans and later by the Saracens and the Berber Corsairs.

The villages and towns were in almost every case constructed at a safe distance inland, sometimes on the foothills, at others at the base of strongholds on the heights to which the populace could retire in case of danger. The territory down to within a few miles of Lucca was part of the Duchy of Modena, though geographically it is Tuscan.

Scenically, the view from the train or the road is a highly romantic one. On the eastern side the mountains rise steeply, broken in places by wide valleys at the end of which are lofty peaks of solid marble

that looks like snow from a distance. Every three or four miles there are castles or walled villages perched on eminences which are rarely, if ever, visited by travellers speeding swiftly southwards, though they were well known to the voyagers of the past progressing more slowly on horseback or in their coaches.

To the west the land is flat. Meadows and vineyards and broad expanses of pine forests go right down to the sea, four or five miles away.

Architecturally, there are some fine churches and municipal buildings, but much of this area has been spoilt by new industries and innumerable and somewhat ugly yards where marble is fashioned after it has been brought down from the quarries.

Geographically, racially and to a certain extent artistically it is Tuscany, but the influence of Florence has only been an indirect one. There is not the same high level of intelligence, the sparkling wit and sophisticated speech that is to be encountered in the immediate vicinity of the Tuscan capital, for at no time were the Dukes of Modena so enlightened or so inspiring to their subjects as the Medici and their Austrian successors.

Nevertheless, when one crosses the Magra one has the sensation of passing an invisible frontier, which is in fact the boundary between northern and central Italy. The peoples of Piedmont, Lombardy and Liguria are hard working, enterprising and law abiding. Their industries are a source of great wealth to the country and their contribution in other respects is an important one.

With the exception of Venice, nearly all that is great in Italian art, literature and learning has come from Tuscany, Umbria and Rome. Culturally they formed almost separate nations, because each of them had so much individuality. The south again has entirely different characteristics. They are, in fact, so different that they cannot be considered as regional attributes. Even within the limits of this rather rough classification, there is an infinite variety of racial types, dialects and traditions, which is one of the greatest charms of Italy.

So, on reaching Sarzana, for instance, one experiences a sensation of change after travelling only a few miles from Lerici. Yet this city was in disputed territory and was held in turn by the Pisans and the Tuscans from whom it was captured by the Genoese in the fifteenth century. From that time onwards it remained in their hands, probably because they fortified it so strongly that no one dared to attack it.

LERICA AND THE CARRARA MOUNTAINS

A few miles to the west of it are to be found the ruins of Luni, an Etruscan town that prospered in Roman times. It appears to have been entirely constructed of the local marble, if we can judge from the amphitheatre, the ancient basilica and other remains. It was raided first by the Barbarians and later by the Normans. Eventually it was almost destroyed in the eleventh century by the Saracens. A century or so later, the remaining inhabitants withdrew to Sarzana, having been driven away, it is said, by malaria and by the fear of further incursions from the sea.

Apart from its strong ramparts, city gates and Gothic cathedral of solid marble this town has other claims to distinction. The first is that it was the birthplace of Pope Nicholas V (1447-55) who conceived the idea of laying out Rome as an architectural whole and started to restore S. Peter's and to build the Vatican. It can also be said of him that he was one of the earliest pontiffs to accept the Greek idea of culture.

The second is that Napoleon's ancestors, the Bonapartes, inhabited this region before they migrated to Corsica in the fifteenth or sixteenth century when, like Sarzana, it belonged to Genoa.

The cathedral, built in the Italian Gothic style of the fourteenth century, is imposing rather than beautiful. The interior contains a number of religious pictures of which one, a primitive of the crucifixion painted in 1138, is of unusual interest for it was brought from Luni and is unique of its kind.

The town hall was constructed by the Florentines during their occupation of the city. It has a fine courtyard in which the arcades are supported by pillars brought from the Roman ruins nearby.

In the Church of S. Francesco there are tombs of the Malaspina family and of one of the sons of the Castruccio Castracane, the condottiere, the great freebooter who became Lord of Lucca, Pistoia and Pisa and held Sarzana for a while.

It was he who built the fortress of Sarzanello on high ground about twenty minutes' walk east of the Porta Nuova. It was for a while the Palace of the Bishops, constructed on the sight of a castle. It is a massive triangular building with deep ditches and a large central keep which can be seen from the main road and from the train.

Avenza still keeps its name as a town though listed as Carrara Apuania in railway handbooks, a statement which may lead to some

confusion. As a matter of fact this headquarters of the marble industry is three miles inland in the centre of a broad valley.

Once again, just above the line, a large and fairly well-preserved castle built by Castruccio Castracane stands out boldly against the mountainsides. Two miles away, on the coast, lies Marina di Carrara, the port where marble is shipped to all parts of the world.

Carrara itself, a city of about twenty-five thousand inhabitants, is given up entirely to the fashioning, carving and marketing of the product of its quarries.

Marble was extracted here in Roman times and then, for some centuries, work ceased owing to the decay of the empire. The industry was revived by the Pisans in their period of prosperity, and it continued to flourish when cathedrals and palaces were constructed in Lucca and other places in the region. Later, Michelangelo himself came to select his material for his statues in the Medici Chapel in Florence. Eventually he obtained it in Pietrasanta because his patrons wished him to spend the vast sums confided to him in Tuscan territory.

The palace formerly belonging to the Dukes of Modena is now the Accademia di Belle Arti and contains a few antique statues and a number of modern works of only limited interest. This mansion was constructed in the sixteenth century and endowed for its present purpose by Napoleon's sister, Elisa Bacciochi, when she became Grand Duchess of Lucca. From the terrace on the roof there is a fine view of the surrounding mountains and the sea.

There are a number of studios but up to the present time none of the local sculptors has produced work of outstanding merit. In the Mediterranean countries and in South America there has always been a demand for inexpensive reproductions and rather fanciful nudes and semi-nudes.

The cathedral built mainly of black-and-white marble, is partly Romanesque but chiefly thirteenth-century Gothic architecture. On its west front I was impressed by a particularly fine rose window. In the interior there are paintings and carvings of all periods, the best feature being a Baroque altar in the north aisle and a fourteenth-century statue of the Madonna and Child by Clemente da Reggio.

A monument to Andrea Doria by Baccio Bandinelli stands in the square. The famous admiral is represented as Neptune with two dolphins at his feet, with water pouring from their jaws.

LERICA AND THE CARRARA MOUNTAINS

A special railway goes up to the quarries high up in the different valleys. Passengers who wish to visit the workings are carried free of charge on the trains to do a journey of interest mainly because of the prospect of the mountains and the views of the plain far below.

The extraction of marble is a difficult matter, not because of its rarity but because the stone has a tendency to split, and unflawed blocks are rare. After the rough material has been transported from the hills it has to be sawn and then polished before being shipped away for export. Quarrying is arduous and sometimes perilous owing to landslides, and the workmen have to go considerable distances to get to their job. They have a reputation for being rough and unruly, but they are nevertheless craftsmen of a very high order. Like most Italian masons they can move and lift very heavy weights, a talent which is, I believe, handed down from father to son.

VII

VIAREGGIO, SHELLEY AND PUCCINI

Massa. Pietrasanta. Forte dei Marmi. Viareggio. Torre del Lago.

THE TOWN of Massa, like its neighbour Carrara, was for a long time fought over by the armies of Lucca and of Pisa. Eventually, through the intervention of the Florentines, the two towns were formed into a Duchy under the rule of the Malespinas. In 1806 this territory was annexed to the Principality of Lucca which Napoleon had given to his sister, Elisa Bacciochi. After Waterloo it became part of the Grand Duchy of Modena.

The Palazzo Ducale, built in the early eighteenth century, is now the Prefecture. In its fine courtyard there are a loggia and a statue of Neptune. Somewhere in this building are kept all the archives of the small state, documents which must be of considerable interest to historians and people in search of unusual material for a novel or a film.

The Malespinas were, on the whole, enlightened rulers and patrons of the arts. Thanks to the marble quarries, they were relatively prosperous, even though many of their estates were far from fertile.

Elisa Bacciochi used the Palazzo as a summer residence during her short reign. She is reported to have had part of the cathedral pulled down to improve the view from her apartments.

In spite of her arbitrary behaviour, she does not appear to have been unpopular for, in other respects, she governed her subjects with a fair amount of liberalism.

The Rocco, a massive castle constructed by the Malespinas in the fifteenth century, dominates the railway line. Near to it are grouped the houses of the old town.

For a long time this fortress was used as a prison. It has a finely

decorated hall and some well-preserved reception-rooms. The view from the hill is an extensive one and there is open country beyond.

Like Avenza, Massa stands at the mouth of a wide valley at the end of which there are high mountains, left bare with much quarrying and blasting. To the west Marina di Massa is a small port from which the local marble is shipped.

From the railway or from the main road, the distant scenes in this region are singularly beautiful. Unfortunately the built-up areas are untidy and lacking in the character which these towns had sixty or seventy years ago, when they were much admired by travellers like Augustus Hare.

In spite of this change, I have always enjoyed my journeys through the district of Carrara, particularly in the springtime when the peaks are capped with snow and the orchards are in bloom. To the east the landscape changes constantly. Villages, churches and castles perch on seemingly inaccessible heights. The mountainsides covered with rich vegetation of varying shades contrast with the dazzling white of the marble cliffs.

It is a fantastic landscape, at times almost too romantic to be real, being rather like the scenes that used to be depicted on the drop curtains of Victorian theatres. That is perhaps its defect, for few serious painters have tried to immortalize it on canvas.

After Pietrasanta the mountains begin to dwindle in size and to turn inland, for it is here that the plain broadens out as Pisa is approached.

Pietrasanta, of some antiquity, is the principal town of a district called the Versilia, bounded by the sea and the mountains. In the Middle Ages it was prosperous because of its marble quarries and because of silver mines which are no longer exploited.

A good portion of the town walls still stands next to the extensive ruins of a thirteenth-century castle. The fourteenth-century cathedral has been moderately well restored and contains works of art of secondary interest. Like so many churches of this category in Italy it is not the sort of place that one would go out of one's way to visit, but it has some good examples of craftsmanship and the pulpit a little out of the ordinary.

I should not myself choose to break my journey at Pietrasanta, because Pisa and Lucca with their greatly superior attractions are only a short distance away. On the other hand, I sometimes like to

linger in places of this type to see if I can discover something that has not been classified a hundred times in ordinary guide books.

There is a mediaeval town hall, now used as a prefecture, and one or two old palaces with carved coats of arms still remain in the rather untidy streets of the centre.

Like the other inland cities of this region, Pietrasanta has its own suburb on the coast, Marina di Pietrasanta, one of a long string of resorts that now almost merge into each other and look very much alike.

The first of them, Forte dei Marmi, has the distinction of being frequented mainly by the minor aristocracy and bourgeoisie of Florence. In the summer it used to have something of the atmosphere of a club, for all the visitors seemed to know each other. At night the usual parade of people walked along the front to see and to be seen, everyone engaged in the endless conversations which can keep Latins entertained for hours.

The main attractions here, as in the neighbouring places, are the sandy beach, the clear water and the miles of pine forest which are considered to be particularly healthy.

Anglo-Saxons, as a rule, prefer rather more sensational scenery, but then, with the Germans, they are the Romantics of the modern world. Most Italians live within sight of a hilly landscape, and it is quite natural that they should want to get away from it. Also, if they can afford it, they take very long holidays and spend the early autumn in the country or in the mountains. This habit partly explains why October and November are very quiet months over here—an important section of the population is trying to recuperate financially after the expenses of the summer.

If Forte dei Marmi seems rather tame after Rapallo or Portofino it is nevertheless a pleasant place for a stay. Bathing, the siesta, a second bathe and the evening stroll fill up the day well enough if you want to rest. The Tuscans are good looking and well dressed and physically they are a beautiful race. Both men and women move gracefully and are good athletes. Even in more popular resorts, the Italian crowd is courteous, friendly, discreet and free from noisy vulgarity.

I am afraid that the quiet character of Forte dei Marmi is disappearing. Taking in Marina di Pietrasanta, and the Lido di Camaiore at Viareggio, there is an almost continuous seafront of twelve miles,

Villas, hotels, holiday camps are strung out in a narrow ribbon of buildings for the greater part of this distance, culminating in a large square which is the hub of the amusement district. Compared to Atlantic City, Brighton or Nice, Viareggio is still a quiet place in spite of its throngs, because the Italians take their pleasures in a leisurely and elegant manner. Then the heat is such that most people spend the greater part of their time sunbathing or paddling about in catamarans on the smooth sea. In winter, though the climate is very mild, there is scarcely a soul about. A few villas are occupied by the families of marble exporters who travel daily to Massa or Carrara.

Some years ago there was a resident population of English, Americans and Germans, but so far they have not returned.

In spite of its extremely modern aspect, Viareggio is of some antiquity. To the south of the main square a small harbour full of yachts and coasting schooners was at one time the port of the Republic of Lucca.

Evelyn, in his diary, mentions cryptically that he spent the night in an obscure inn at a place called "Viregio", for although he spoke Italian fluently his spelling was not above reproach. He had a difficult trip down from Genoa as the sea was so rough that his felucca had been forced to put in at Porto Venere. His party had landed at Larici where, "being Sunday, was a great procession carrying the Sacrament about the streets in solemn devotion". Here they took post horses and passed through Sarzana and Massa where he was much impressed by the marble quarries.

Unfortunately Evelyn had not the same interest in human beings and their foibles as Pepys. He was, admittedly, a man of far greater culture, but he was a conventional traveller who set down in detail his impressions of the works of art and buildings that he saw. If Pepys had made the same journey, we should have had an astonishing and fascinating record of life in seventeenth-century Italy, that would have surpassed even the memoirs of Casanova in vividness. We should have known precisely what the landlord of the obscure inn looked like, what he said, and what dishes he served for dinner. If his wife or daughter were pretty the stay of one night would, in all probability, have been protracted for several days. . . .

It was not until late in the eighteenth century that voyagers realized the infinite variety of dress, customs and architecture that was to be

found all over western Europe and in particular in Italy. Even seventy or eighty years ago most villages and a great many towns had regional costumes that were colourful and becoming. In the same period hundreds of thousands of buildings have been constructed, of which the vast majority only serve to swamp the finer architecture of the past.

In 1644, most of the features that we admire in a town like, for instance, Pietrasanta, were already in existence, but the painters and writers of the period were not interested in the contemporary scene because they were under the influence of the Classical Movement. Their predecessors had recorded almost every phase of life that they saw. Their successors, particularly after the time of Rousseau, did the same to a lesser extent.

Viareggio, however, has more vital literary associations than Evelyn's brief stay in the town. In the Piazza Shelley there is a monument to the poet with the following inscription:

"To P. B. Shelley, drowned in this sea in 1822, consumed by fire on this shore where he meditated the addition to *Prometheus Unbound* of a posthumous page, in which every generation would have an interpretation of its struggles, its sorrows and its redemption."

During the months he spent at Pisa, Shelley had passed hours wandering through the pine forests that lie between the Serchio and the Arno, lingering by the solitary lakes and pools and bathing in the rivers. Sometimes he set out alone, at others he would ride accompanied by Trelawny, Edward Williams or Byron. This district, which lies to the south of Viareggio, has changed but little in the intervening time, though now it is crossed by two or three roads. It exercised a strange fascination upon the poet, and it inspired him to do some of his best work. Often he would leave his companions to meditate on the beach, filling them with great anxiety when he strayed away too far. Trelawny wrote: "The careless, not to say impatient, way in which the poet bore his burden of life, caused a vague dread among his family and friends that he might lose it or cast it away at any moment."

Events proved how right this presentiment was. It was in the summer of the same year that Shelley's body was found on the shore near Viareggio, at that time a small and desolate village. His corpse had been duly identified by his friends and then buried by the local authorities at the precise place where it was discovered. Since the

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remains could not be moved because of the quarantine regulations of the Tuscan Government, it was finally decided that they should be cremated and consent was at last obtained after prolonged negotiations.

Complicated preparations for the ceremony were made by Trelawny who had suggested that it should be conducted according to the classical ritual of ancient Greece. A special iron frame was made on which the body was to be placed, and incense, honey, wine and salt were brought to be sprinkled upon it before its destruction by fire.

Eventually a party which included Byron, Leigh Hunt and a squad of soldiers arrived on the beach. On the first day, the corpse of Edward Williams was duly disinterred and consigned to the flames. The proceedings took so long that Shelley's obsequies were postponed until the morrow.

Once again this strange drama was enacted on the beach, this time rather nearer to Viareggio, at the spot where the poet had been washed up by the sea. They had to search some time before they could find his sepulchre.

So much time had passed since his death that the flesh on his face and hands had disappeared and his clothes were tattered and torn, but his friends proceeded with their grim task.

According to Trelawny there were a few spectators, members of the local population, kept at a distance by the soldiers. Some Italian sources state that there were demonstrations of indignation and disgust against this pagan and rather horrible performance in what was then a wild setting of sea and forest with mountains in the distance.

To-day the view of the Apuan hills is screened by houses and hotels, and thousands of holiday makers disport themselves on the sand, so that it is rather difficult to evoke the scene that has been so many times described.

The body took many hours to burn, but Trelawny stood at his post and continued to pour out libations on it, repeating at intervals, these words:

"I restore to nature, through fire, the elements of which this man was composed; everything is changed but not annihilated; he is now a portion of that which he worshipped."

At last most of Shelley's earthly form was consumed except for

the heart which remained unscathed. In spite of the heat, Trelawny pulled it out of the flames, though he scorched himself in doing so. The ashes of the deceased were collected in a box and placed on board Lord Byron's yacht. The party then climbed into a carriage drawn by buffaloes and returned slowly to the inn, presumably the one which Evelyn had visited a hundred and seventy years before.

Shelley's heart was taken to Boscombe, in England. A grave was found for his other remains in the Protestant cemetery in Rome not far from the tomb of Keats, but not next to it as he would have hoped. Nearby is buried Trelawny who died in 1881 after a long and astonishingly romantic career. The son of a distinguished West Country family he had deserted from the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic wars. For a few years he commanded a Malay pirate ship which captured and destroyed a number of British merchantmen. During this time he married an Arab girl of great beauty after having saved her life. When she died he gave up his lawless calling and returned to his native country where he made no secret of his past activities. In spite of this, he was offered a commission in his Majesty's Foot Guards. He declined the offer, but if he had accepted it, he would most certainly have served under Wellington at the battle of Waterloo.

As soon as he had settled Shelley's affairs, he went with Byron to Genoa, and then followed him to Greece. The two men did not get on very well and after a while they parted, though quite amicably. The poet remained at Missolonghi and Trelawny joined forces with a partisan chief named Odysseus whose headquarters were in a cave not far from Mount Olympus. It was here that the ex-pirate married for the third time, choosing as his bride the daughter of his Greek associate. When the battle of Navarino put an end to the Turkish domination of Greece, he returned home leaving behind him his wife with whom he had already quarrelled.

Although his emotional life was to continue to be a stormy one, his sensational adventures were at an end. Effectively he began to dwell mainly on his past, and devoted much of his energy to recording what he had seen and to his contacts with Shelley and Byron. It has been stated that much of what he wrote is exaggerated and inaccurate, but his memoirs have certainly the great virtue of giving us a graphic picture of two great men, and they have all the vigour and colour which we associate with the Romantic Movement.

VIAREGGIO, SHELLEY AND PUCCINI

The life of another great man is linked up with Viareggio, and in this case for a great many years.

Giacomo Puccini was born in 1858, a few miles away at Lucca. After his first success with the opera *Manon Lescaut*, he came with his wife to Torre del Lago, on the Lake of Massaciuccoli, where he rented a small house. Later he built himself an unpretentious villa there. Although he was of a restless turn of mind and collected a good many other residences in his days of great prosperity, it was here that he spent most of his time, and composed the greater part of his best-known works. He had, it is true, an apartment in Milan, a cottage at Abetone high up in the Apennines, and a small shooting box in the depths of the Maremma, but in his letters he always stressed his preference for his home in the woods on the waterside.

Eventually, when the peacefulness of his retreat was disturbed by the construction of a factory in its immediate vicinity, he transferred his quarters to Viareggio, where he died two years later in 1924. It was a hard blow to have to move after having enjoyed the calm of the forest for so many years in conditions that he liked so much. It was unfortunate for posterity also because it prevented him from finishing the score of his last opera *Turandot*.

The villa has been preserved as a museum to his memory. It contains many of his personal possessions, his furniture, and most of the presents and tributes sent to him by admirers during his lifetime. In the chapel is his tomb, surmounted by a white marble figure of a muse in bas relief carved by the Florentine sculptor, Antonio Maraini.

Since the lake is only a mile away from the autostrada that goes from Viareggio to Florence, it is worth a fleeting visit. Still a place of some attraction, it is surrounded on most sides by woods. Close by, the electric power station consuming peat was the innovation that drove Puccini away from his home.

Oddly enough, in this remote place, on the far side of the water, there lived an Englishwoman whose name is almost forgotten now, though its fame was very nearly revived by the composer. Louise de la Ramée, better known as "Ouida", was the author of some dozens of best sellers. *Under Two Flags* is still filmed every few years in Hollywood or elsewhere. She achieved success at a very early age, and soon began to earn vast sums of money with novels which presented a highly exotic aspect of London and of the Guards' officers

in particular. She herself was unduly extravagant and entertained on such a lavish scale that she was forced to go to the Continent to economize.

Unfortunately the large and sumptuous villa that she rented near Florence only led her to continue her expensive way of living. Eventually when the vogue for her books diminished, she was forced to beat another strategic retreat, this time to Lucca. Although she was granted pensions by the British and the Italian Governments she still failed to make both ends meet. Finally she went into retirement at Massarosa almost next door to Puccini's retreat.

As far as we know, he never met her, but for some time he contemplated using one of her books as a theme for an opera. There were so many copyright difficulties that the scheme was never realized, though the novel in question, *Two Wooden Shoes*, was employed as the basis of a libretto by another composer, but without success.

"Ouida" died leaving no money at all, but a few debts. Her creditors, hoping to save something from the wreckage, tried to dispose of the musical rights of her work and one of them approached Puccini.

According to Mr. Vincent Seligman, author of *Puccini Among Friends*, they were bought by Riccordi of Vienna for the sum of two thousand lire in order that they might be available for the composer.

VIII

LUCCA AND PISA

Lucca. Bagni di Lucca. Pisa. Leghorn. Castiglioncello.

FROM VIAREGGIO to Lucca is no more than twenty miles that are swiftly and easily covered on the autostrada that leads to Florence.

Lucca is by-passed by the main road. This is fortunate since its old-world character is well worth preserving.

It is a town that I have always liked, not only because of its beauty and fine architecture, but mainly because it has even more individuality than most Italian provincial cities of its kind.

Probably founded by the Etruscans, it must have been a place of some importance in Roman times, for it had an amphitheatre of considerable size of which the ruins can still be seen.

After having been overrun by the Barbarians, it was part of the Duchy of Tuscany until it gained its independence as a republic in the year 1115.

In the fourteenth century it fell under the domination of the famous condottiere Castruccio Castracane who headed a league of cities against Florence.

For a century it was under the yoke of several different masters, and then for nearly three hundred years it was independent until annexed by the French after they had conquered northern Italy.

In 1805, at the request of the Gonfaloniere of the city, Napoleon created his brother-in-law, Felix Baciocchi, Prince of Lucca with his wife Elisa as consort.

She was an intelligent and masterful woman who undertook to reform her tiny state. She built herself a palace, appointed many court officials and set out to encourage the arts. Two theatres were constructed, of which one is a really delightful example of Classical

Revival architecture. She also created an Academy of Fine Arts which comprised among its members some artists of talent. The efforts of the Duchess contributed to bring a measure of prosperity to her subjects, both in Lucca and in Piombino, the first of the principalities given to her by the Emperor. Her greatest success in this respect was the commercialization of the studios of Carrara, that turned out quantities of statues which were sold in all parts of the world.

Though a very ugly woman Elisa had a succession of lovers, a circumstance that apparently passed unnoticed by the general public until she was created Grand Duchess of Tuscany and went to Florence. There, her conduct shocked the Florentines, and when Napoleon fell she was driven away by the indignant populace.

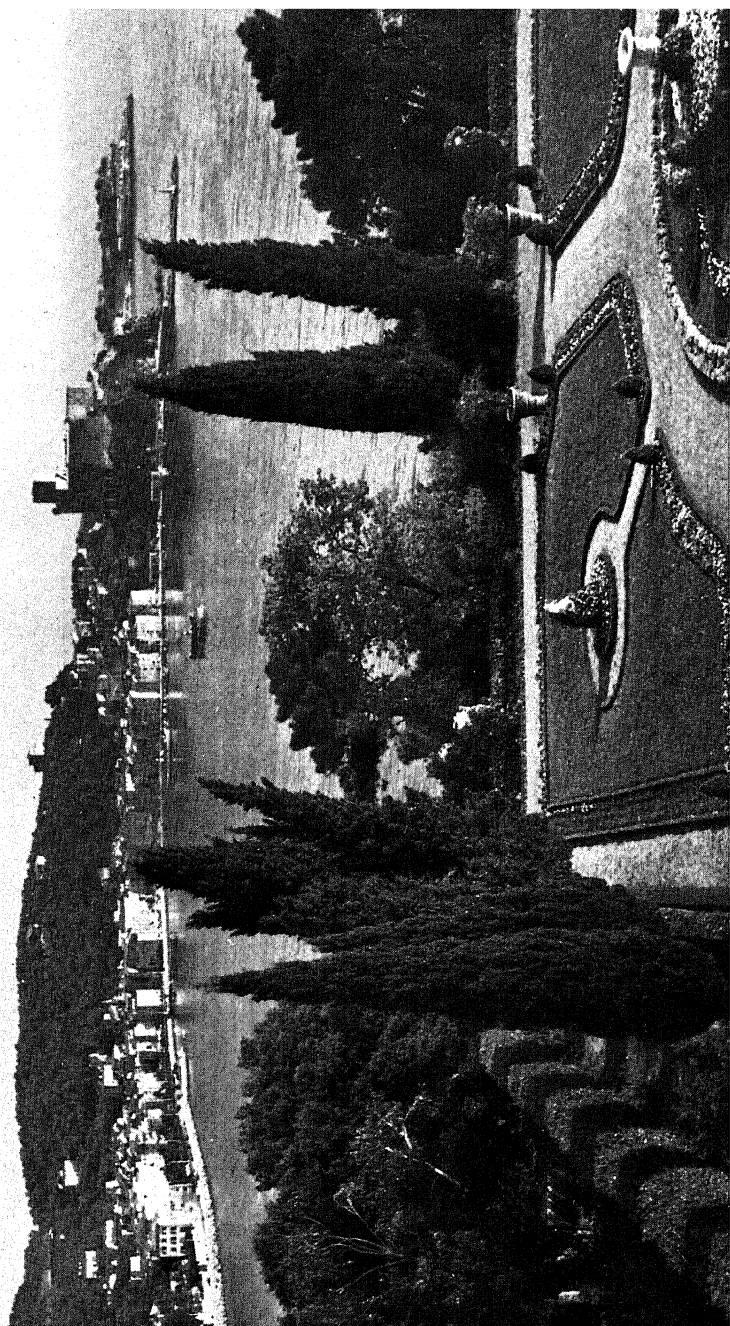
The immediate approach to Lucca is pleasant, for it is completely surrounded by massive fortifications that date from the sixteenth century. The ramparts are so wide that they are topped by an avenue of a double row of trees. Every few hundred yards there are huge heart-shaped bastions, the interiors of which have been made into attractive public gardens.

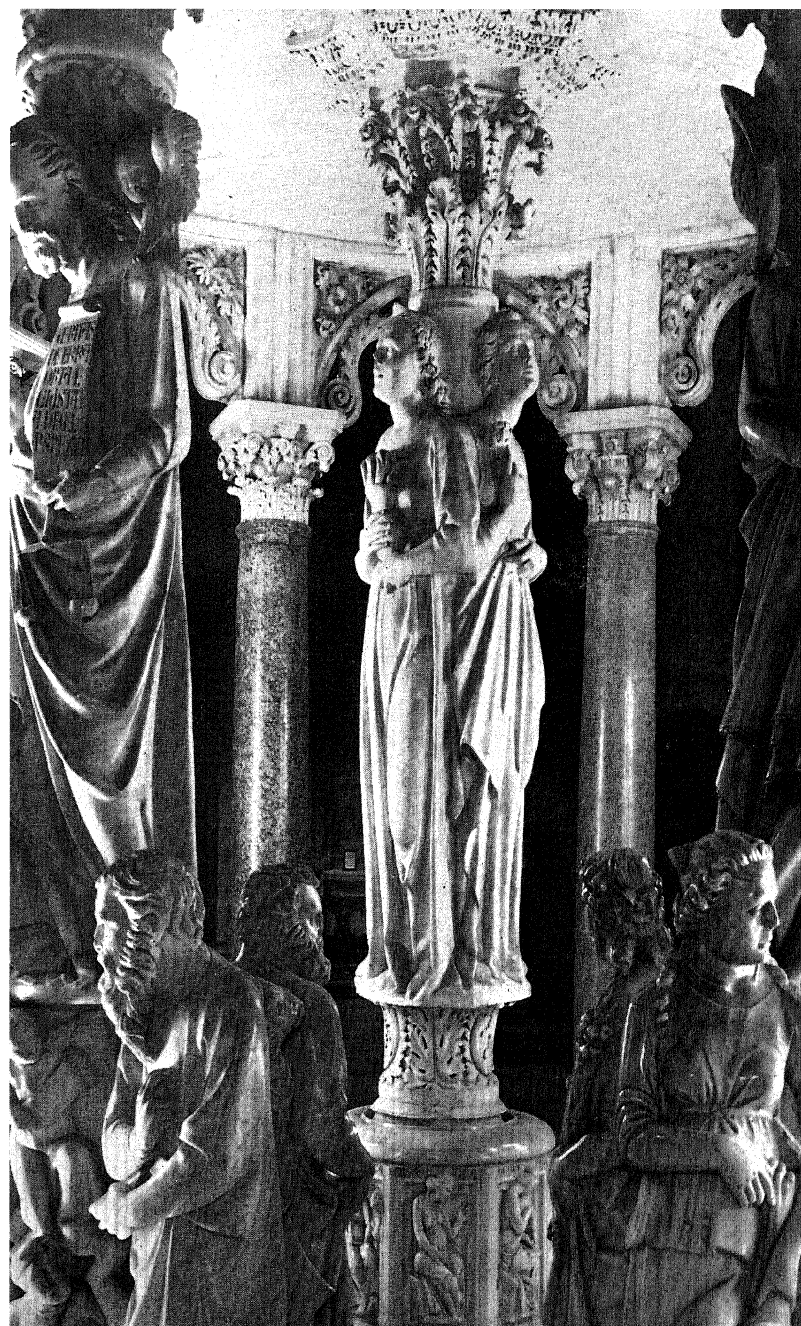
Within these walls there are not many buildings erected after the beginning of the nineteenth century. Several of the churches date back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and some of the houses are of late mediaeval construction. The usual narrow streets without sidewalks are characteristic of old Italian towns, but here they are exceptionally clean.

Lucca, as the centre of the olive oil industry and of rich agricultural districts, is not poor but the real wealth is concentrated in a few hands. The Lucchese had a reputation in the past of being crafty and rather cruel, yet I have always found them to be gentle, kind and rather hospitable, though not so lively as the Florentines.

I had a strange adventure here during the war, shortly after the city was liberated. As I was walking down a narrow street I was hailed in the local dialect by what looked like a typical old beggar-woman. She seemed so hungry that I gave her all my spare cash and was profusely thanked. Suddenly she looked closely at my uniform and added in perfect English: "I am really most grateful to you, sir."

Unfortunately I was on urgent business so that I could not do anything more to help my unfortunate compatriot, whom I was quite unable to trace subsequently.





LUCCA AND PISA

Another remarkable discovery I made was that the tradition of culture in Lucca is such that there are still a number of painters and sculptors who can make a living here, although the total population is not more than forty-five thousand.

The theatres, unfortunately, have been closed down but it is to be hoped that they will reopen, for the dramatic instinct in Italy is strong. Twenty-five years ago the three hundred and fifty thousand Florentines could support six playhouses, of which two frequently presented opera.

Lucca was in its heyday in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the early days of the republic, and its finest monuments date from that period.

The Cathedral of S. Martino was founded in the sixth century by the Irish Bishop S. Frediano, but rebuilt in the beginning of the thirteenth century in the Pisan manner. The façade has three superimposed galleries with rounded arches supported on slender pillars. The three Romanesque porticoes below have wooden doors with a wealth of sixteenth-century carving. In full relief over the porches are a "Descent from the Cross" and an "Adoration of the Magi" by Niccolo Pisano.

In the interior there are so many masterpieces that it would be impossible for me to describe them in detail, the most notable being the tomb of Ilaria del Carreto by Jacopo della Quercia, a graceful and dignified marble effigy of a recumbent woman, whose draperies and face express infinite repose.

In the south aisle there is an altar-piece of "The Last Supper" by Tintoretto. Matteo Civitale is represented here by several works. Firstly by a hexagonal pulpit on a pedestal with figures in bas relief on each of the sides. Secondly by the monument to Piero da Noceto, and lastly by the Tempietto, a partially gilded marble shrine which contains the Volto Santo di Lucca, a crucifix alleged to have been made by Nicodemus and brought by a miracle to Lucca. In the immediate vicinity there is also a statue of San Sebastian by the same sculptor.

Of the many other churches in the town, S. Michele, founded in the eighth century, was rebuilt in the thirteenth century and has since been restored. The façade in the Pisan manner has a multiplicity of carved figures of human beings and animals. The great virtue of this structure lies in its harmonious proportions and the fine balance of

BY ITALIAN SHORES

the campanile with the main body. The belfry has some points of resemblance in design with Giotto's tower in Florence.

S. Frediano was founded, so it is said, in the sixth century, and rebuilt in the twelfth. It also contains work by Jacopo della Quercia and Civitale, notably a painted bas relief of the *Assumption of the Virgin Mary* by the latter.

The greatest masterpiece of this church is a large circular front, entirely covered with carved figures, and yet preserving perfect symmetry, the whole representing the crossing of the Red Sea by Israelites who wear mediaeval armour and tread on queer-shaped fish.

In the Church of San Francesco, on the east side of the city, is the tomb of Castruccio Castracane.

The wanderer through Lucca can find much to interest him. There is, for instance, the circular Piazza built on the site of the amphitheatre. The massive Gothic Palace of the Guinigi, who were for a while lords of the place, has a tall battlemented tower. Fine doorways, Renaissance mansions, mediaeval houses, and small gardens turn up at all sorts of odd and unexpected corners.

The hub of the town is the Piazza Napoleone. It has in the centre a statue of the Duchess Marie Louise de Bourbon, who ruled over Lucca as well as Parma after the death of Marie Louise, wife of Napoleon.

On one side is the former Palazzo Ducale, built in 1728 in a rather chill but harmonious classical style. In a courtyard at the back the Pinacoteca has a collection containing many major works of art, including two Tintoretos and the splendid portrait of Bianca Capello by Bronzino.

The Museo Civico, next to the Church of S. Francesco, is housed in a palace built by one of the Guinigi in 1418 when he was Lord of Lucca.

Sixteen miles to the north of the city Bagni di Lucca, a spa that has been popular for many centuries, is situated in the valley of the Serchio. It is crossed at Borgo a Mozzano by a Gothic bridge built in the fourteenth century by Casruccio Castracani.

At the fifth kilometre from Lucca, Elisa Bacciochi's summer residence of Marlia, is a large villa in the French style with formal gardens adorned with statues, fountains and decorative basins.

Bagni di Lucca, in a setting of chestnut woods, hills and streams,

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has far more attraction than the more modern spa of Montecatini, a few miles farther north on the autostrada to Florence.

It was frequented in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by a great many travellers, including John Evelyn who describes his stay there in his diary.

Pisa lies ten miles to the south-west of Lucca in the midst of a flat and almost treeless plain relieved by the presence of rather romantic looking hills to the north.

In spite of its mournful, rather deserted aspect, it has nearly sixty thousand inhabitants, many of whom live in the industrial suburbs beyond the railway station on the south bank.

The town was most severely bombarded during the Second World War, but fortunately it was these newer quarters that suffered rather than the old streets, the University and the surroundings of the cathedral on the right bank of the Arno. The one irreparable loss was the destruction by fire of the greater part of the frescoes in the Campo Santo.

According to some authorities, Pisa was originally a colony of Greeks who established themselves in this region in the seventh or sixth centuries B.C. They were succeeded by the Etruscans and later by the Romans who used the mouth of the river as a naval base.

Under the empire it was a large and prosperous city with baths, theatres and palaces, all traces of which have disappeared save for some of the stonework used in the construction of the cathedral and still recognizable by Latin inscriptions.

After the oblivion of the dark ages, Pisa suddenly emerged in the beginning of the eleventh century as a rich and powerful maritime republic whose fleets helped the Normans to conquer Sicily, expelled the Saracens from Sardinia, and even defeated them in battle off the coast of Tunisia.

Her merchants established trading centres in places like Trapani, Syracuse, Palermo, Calabria and Salerno, and her domination was felt in the greater part of the western Mediterranean, including the Balearic Islands.

For a while Pisan territory stretched from Porto Venere to Civita Vecchia, and it was with the wealth obtained through commerce and victorious campaigns that the magnificent monuments and buildings of the town were constructed.

Threatened by the growing power of Genoa and Florence, Pisa

tried to maintain herself with the support of the Holy Roman Emperors as a Ghibelline State.

After a long struggle the Pisans were defeated at Meloria by the Genoese Admiral Doria. He put an end to their commercial activities by filling up the mouth of the Arno with blocks of stone.

From that time onwards her colonies and territories began to melt away so that by the fifteenth century she was in a position of inferiority to Florence by whom she was annexed in 1509.

The Grand Dukes of Tuscany took the keenest interest in the welfare of the city, encouraging the arts and the building of fine monuments. They ordered the reclamation of the marshy land in the surrounding districts.

Since Pisa was the first of the states in north-western Italy to trade and develop a colonial empire, it was natural that she should precede them in her cultural development.

The Pisan school of architecture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was influenced by the Byzantines. Its churches and other constructions have more form, and perhaps greater balance, than either those of Florence or Venice in the early days of the Renaissance.

The three members of the Pisano family were supreme as sculptors in their time. In painting, the Pisans never reached the high level of attainment of their neighbours, for the best of the masterpieces of the Campo Santo were the work of Gozzoli and other Florentines or Sienese.

Standing apart at the north-west of the city is the famous group of buildings which attracts tourists from all over the world. The soft creamy white marble of the cathedral, the Baptistry, the Leaning Tower and the Campo Santo set among dull green velvety lawns, shines against the brilliant blue of the sky as though the most beautiful and precious examples of architecture had been lifted out from the rest of the town and set apart for special veneration. When the moon is full they take on an unearthly beauty; the copper domes show pale green against the dark sky and the marble columns are thrown into sharp relief by violet shadows. It seems almost that for a night we are allowed to look on at an earlier civilization and to people the strongly shaped shadows cast on the smooth lawns with ghosts of generations of Pisans. The Campo Santo becomes a veritable "Garden of the Dead" designed by Giovanni Pisano at the end

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of the thirteenth century to enclose the sacred earth brought back from Palestine by Archbishop Ubaldo de' Lanfranchi in fifty-three shiploads. By night we can get some idea of the original simplicity of this, the earliest and most lovely of the cemeteries in Italy, but by day the terrible destruction wrought by the Second World War is only too apparent. The outer walls of this arcaded quadrangle are without windows and are covered with a series of frescoes most of which are badly damaged. Many of them are scorched and blistered with patches of plaster flaked off. They are in the process of being restored and, in time, it should be possible to get some idea of their former beauty. The dry beams of the roof blazed quickly and fell in against the walls whilst molten lead ran down on to the pavement cracking the marble monuments into fragments. Unfortunately the greatest damage has occurred to Benozzo Gozzoli's famous series of frescoes whereas the less important ones on the west wall are fairly well preserved. One interesting result followed this disastrous fire: some of the delicate monochrome drawings have been uncovered where the colour has flaked off and the whole procedure of fresco painting can be studied in detail.

Fortunately only slight damage was done to the other buildings which retain their former splendour. The roof of the cathedral was hit but not seriously damaged. The whole building is of marble and was begun in 1064 by Buschetto and consecrated in 1188. The cost was covered by the booty from "six vessels laden with rich merchandise" captured from the Saracens at Palermo. The magnificent façade has five tiers of slender pillars. It was transformed by Rainaldo in the thirteenth century, but he seems to have kept to Buschetto's original design and the building remains one of the oldest Romanesque structures in Pisa. It is, roughly speaking, contemporary with the cathedral at Lucca and almost identical in design. It was restored in the late sixteenth century after a fire had caused considerable damage to the nave and had destroyed all but one of the ancient bronze gates; the one in the south transept designed by Bonnanus at the end of the twelfth century on which he depicts twenty-four scenes from Bible history.

The cathedral is built in the shape of a Latin cross with a cupola at the meeting of the nave and transepts. The mellowed white marble is decorated with black and coloured bands like so many of the buildings of this period. The interior gives a feeling of majesty and

vastness out of all proportion to the actual size. This is achieved partly by the harmonious proportions and partly by the double aisles which help to increase the feeling of great space. Many of the pillars collected from ancient buildings retain their old capitals. Those in the centre were brought from Giglio and Elba. The hundred windows when filled with the stained glass, taken to safety during the war, cast a soft light through the imposing colonnades and through the rather solemn dimness they illuminate the richly gilded Renaissance ceiling and the mosaics designed by Cimabue in the dome.

Most of the tombs which used to be in the nave have been removed to the Campo Santo, but Buschetto's sarcophagus with its inscription still remains. In the sacristy is a superb ivory Madonna and Child by Giovanni Pisano. The graceful curve of the Virgin's body follows the form of the ivory tusk from which it was cut and the long lines of the simple drapery give it perfect balance.

The lovely circular baptistry with its great elliptical dome also of white marble with insets of a soft blue, rises from a platform of three steps. It was begun by Dietisalvi in the middle of the twelfth century.

The baptistry contains one of the greatest treasures of Tuscan art, a magnificent pulpit, the first great work of sculpture by Niccolò Pisano. Although the simple beauty of this lovely carving has a timeless appeal its effect on the thirteenth-century Italians must have been quite overwhelming. Unlike the great carvers of France and England, the Italians had produced little more than rather stiff and grotesque efforts before this period. The richness of technique and the substitution of a warm human approach for the earlier use of symbolism must have opened up a completely new world of art. The figures, animals and trees could be more or less identified with real people and places and the Holy Family were set on earth in familiar surroundings. They were no longer conventionalized and set apart from the life of the period. The Baby is a pathetic little child; the Virgin and the angels are real, albeit majestic, people; the trees are bursting into leaf; the goat lifts up his leg to scratch his ear. This great change in the approach to art had happened almost overnight. The people had not been gradually acclimatized to it. In spite of this deep human sympathy shown in the panels on the pulpit, Niccolò Pisano has kept an architectural simplicity and a monumental grandeur and has not let the delightful and lively detail detract from the design as a whole. There is a classical dignity in all his figures

and he brings out the dramatic force of the more important among them by cutting very deeply into the marble and thus making them stand out more strongly in relief. The five panels represent: "The Nativity", "The Adoration", "The Circumcision", "The Crucifixion" and "The Last Judgment". The most lovely is "The Nativity". "The Crucifixion" is full of feeling and movement but has not the superb composition and harmony of line of "The Nativity."

The famous Campanile attracts tourists because it leans some thirteen feet out of the perpendicular, as though it were the only tower in Italy that leaned. In actual fact it is a very beautiful piece of architecture and its curious slant is merely of incidental interest. This great cylindrical tower was begun by Bonannus of Pisa and William of Innsbruck in 1174. There is one solid storey and above it rise tier upon tier of open arcades with slender pillars. The view from the top of the tower, particularly at sunset, is a sight not to be missed.

There is much to be seen in Pisa besides the cathedral and the leaning tower though a great many tourists seem to ignore this fact.

Only a few yards away, the splendid Piazza dei Cavalieri is, in its own way, one of the finest squares in Italy. On one side is the Church of S. Stefano, dedicated to the Tuscan Order of the Knights of Stephen. This structure was built to the designs of Vasari (author of the *Lives of the Painters*). The interior is decorated with flags and trophies captured from the Turks at the battle of Lepanto, and by the carved prow of the galleys furnished by the Order.

To the left the Palazzo dei Cavalieri, designed by the same architect, is used as a training college. In the façade there are six niches containing the busts of Medici Grand Dukes.

In the centre of the square stands a fine Baroque statue of Cosimo I.

The Palazzo dell'Orologio at the far end also belongs to the end of the sixteenth century and was built on the site of the tower in which were imprisoned Count Gherardesca and his two sons. He had been accused of betraying the state at the battle of Meloria and as a punishment he and his boys were condemned to death by starvation.

A member of the same family founded the University or Fabbrica della Sapienza (factory of knowledge or wisdom) in 1329, though the present structure was built by the orders of Cosimo in the sixteenth century. As early as the twelfth century there had been groups of scholars who pursued their studies in Pisa. In 1202 a monk named

Leonardo Fibonacci was responsible for the introduction of Arabic numerals to Europe, and a few years later an English cleric in the same town translated books of algebra from Arabic into Latin. Galileo was also a Pisan and the most distinguished of the alumni of the University which still flourishes to-day.

The section of the city on the north bank of the river has kept its ancient character, with a number of old churches and palaces and characteristic streets. Many of the fine old bridges were blown up by the Germans, and some of them will never be restored to their previous condition.

The Lungarno, the quays along the Arno, have a rather sad charm for one feels that the greatest glories of Pisa are past. The old citadel at the western extremity of the town was destroyed during the war, but the Madonna della Spina fortunately escaped. This delightful thirteenth century Gothic church was built to house a portion of the "Crown of Thorns" and used as a shrine by sailors until the port was blocked.

On the quays of the north bank many ancient houses overlook the jade green water that flows slowly by. Among the finest of them are the Palazzo Upezzinghi of the Baroque period and the Palazzo Agostini, a fourteenth-century brick building with an elaborate façade.

At the eastern end of the town, next to the Palazzo del Governo, stands the Palazzo Lanfranchi, a big white mansion probably designed by a pupil of Michelangelo. Here Byron came with his famous circus of dogs, monkeys and people, including Count Gamba, the tiresome brother of his mistress Teresa Guiccioli. He left after Shelley's death, partly to give up sharing his house with the Leigh Hunts and partly because his restless nature impelled him to move.

Leghorn, some ten miles from Pisa, a seaport of about 120,000 inhabitants, was originally a fortress built to protect the approaches of the latter from Saracen incursions. It was repeatedly sacked and destroyed by the troops of neighbouring states. In the beginning of the fifteenth century the Florentines turned it into a naval base and constructed the present inner harbour.

Ferdinand I of Tuscany brought prosperity to Leghorn by making it a free port and promulgating the *Livornina*, a decree by which the town was thrown open to the Jews of all nations.

An Englishman, Robert Dudley, son of Elizabeth's Earl of Leices-

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ter, became governor of the arsenal and directed the construction of the new harbour.

Trade tended to decline after the unification when the special privileges were withdrawn.

Apart from the sixteenth-century fortifications little remains of architectural interest in Leghorn except for the porch of the cathedral built by Inigo Jones.

Near the harbour a statue of Ferdinand has four bronze figures of Turkish slaves round the base.

The Protestant cemetery contains the tomb of Tobias Smollett, as well as those of the generations of British merchants who have lived here for the past three centuries.

In the slave market men could gamble on their freedom or sell themselves for a number of years of servitude.

On the hills at the back of the city stands the shrine of Montenero where Smollett spent the last two years of his life.

To the south of the harbour is an esplanade with large hotels and a number of bathing beaches.

Farther down on the line to Rome lies Quercianella, a quiet and unpretentious little seaside resort situated in a pine forest. Castiglioncello, five miles away, is rather larger but has much the same kind of pleasant setting.

IX

ELBA

I HAD BEEN trying for twenty years or more to get to Elba, but I had always been prevented from doing so by some unexpected hindrance. I knew that it was unspoilt, that the scenery was beautiful and that, in spite of what was generally believed, it was not really very inaccessible. Foolishly enough I had never taken advantage of the repeated invitations from Elban friends to come over for the tunny fishing season, although at that time they held the concession to exploit this rather unusual and interesting industry.

When at last I made up my mind to visit the place of Napoleon's first exile, I was told that shipping services were irregular and that I might have to wait some time to get a boat. Nothing was further from the truth. A comfortable ferry leaves Piombino twice a day for Porto Ferraio and does the very pleasant trip of ten or eleven miles in little over an hour.

Eventually on a very hot day I got out of the Genoa-Rome express at Campiglia, the junction for the port of departure, and made hurriedly for the refreshment room to slake my thirst with some coca-cola which is now well on the way to becoming the national drink of Italy. The small local train was baking in the sunshine so I waited until the very last moment before clambering into a torrid compartment.

When we finally set off I found myself surrounded by a group of reporters who were on their way to attend a regional football championship match at Piombino. As the temperature was well over 95 degrees Fahrenheit, I could not help admiring the fervour and enthusiasm which induced teams to play in such weather only three or four hours after noon. Evidently the visiting side had plenty of supporters for the little train was crammed and, as I looked out of the windows I could see cyclists and motorists by the hundred speeding along the roads towards the same objective.

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The country on either side of the line seemed rather flat and uninteresting, but on the south side, over an expanse of yellow wheat-field, I could see the blue waters of the Bay of Follonica and beyond it the hilly promontory of Cape Ala.

Our first stop was at the halt for Populonia which is three miles away on the north side of the Piombino Peninsula. It was an important harbour in Etruscan times, for it was here that the ore from Elba was shipped to the mainland. In the fifth century A.D. it fell into decay. Eight centuries later all that was left of the city was enclosed by ramparts as a protection from raids by pirates.

Just below the present village is Porto Baratti, a little fishing port overlooking a small and almost landlocked inlet. It was near here that were discovered the ruins of the Etruscan Acropolis, part of which have been excavated, though they were not yet open to the public at the time of my visit.

Porto Vecchio, the dock quarter of Piombino, is of no kind of interest except that it is the point of departure for the Elba boats, and it has become more or less derelict since the iron foundries on the island are no longer worked. The town itself is partly industrial and partly rural but, being off the main lines of communication, it has kept a really provincial atmosphere. There are few buildings of note except a mediaeval castle in the centre, but the principal square has one side opening out on to the sea and there is a terrace with fine views of the mountains of Elba which can be very clearly seen.

The people of Piombino are astonishingly tough, perhaps because the majority of them are either sailors or ironworkers.

In 1943 they fought one of the most courageous and dramatic partisan actions of the Second World War, a battle, which, as far as I know, has never been related to the world at large and certainly deserves to be recorded.

On September 9th, the day after Marshal Badoglio had signed the armistice with the Allies, my Elban friend, Gustavo, arrived from the north and found the city in the hands of a Committee of Liberation. Since he was the only military member of the organization he was immediately put in charge of affairs. The soldiers and sailors were already disbanding so he approached the commanders of the garrison and requested them to retain their forces as a German flotilla was believed to be arriving from Corsica.

BY ITALIAN SHORES

The naval officer was quite prepared to co-operate, but the army leaders were dilatory and uncertain. After a great deal of discussion they finally agreed to hand over some weapons to the civilian elements who were preparing to put up a resistance.

In the meantime the Germans had appeared and had landed parties with the pretext that they were short of fresh water. The military authorities who hoped to get rid of them had put up no kind of opposition to these operations.

The Germans then made other demands and continued to disembark troops, occupying the semaphore station and the local iron-works.

Finally the Committee of Liberation gave the Germans an ultimatum to depart before nine o'clock that evening, but the invaders began to open fire on the town a few minutes after that time.

Then began one of the strangest combats imaginable, strange because the Italian forces were composed of volunteers who had almost spontaneously gathered together to resist the enemies of their country. There were disbanded soldiers and sailors with the civilians, all under the direction of Gustavo, who had anyway been deprived of his commission many years previously because of his anti-fascist opinions. Since the opponents were entangled up in the darkness, the victory ought to have been on the side of the well-disciplined and well-organized Germans, but it did not work out that way. The shore batteries engaged the enemy ships and the bands of partisans started to round up the detachments that had disembarked.

A small squad of Italian tanks attacked the landing craft as they drew up on the beach. Since the gunners had no ammunition for their guns, sundry Piombinese fishermen (adepts at illegal fish-bombing) sat on the turrets of their vehicles and hurled sticks of dynamite at the Nazis as they tried to get ashore.

By daybreak the fighting was over. The partisans were jubilant, as well they might be. In six or seven hours they had destroyed eight out of the eleven landing craft, sunk two corvettes and a large merchant ship carrying munitions, and blown up a two-thousand-ton tanker. They had certainly inflicted a great many casualties on the invaders and they had made about two hundred prisoners.

Towards the end of the morning, the Committee of Liberation received orders from the general commanding the district to cease all hostilities and to set their captives free. Since they were not

prepared to fight against their compatriots the local leaders obeyed reluctantly and fled into the countryside.

A few weeks later Gustavo was arrested as a suspect, and held as prisoner in a small town of the Maremma. Although he was tortured repeatedly the Gestapo never succeeded in making him give away his friends or reveal his identity. After a while they gave up trying to make him talk. They were so impressed by his apparent stupidity that he was given a certain amount of freedom. Making the fullest possible use of this privilege, he contacted his associates and from his cell he directed all the operations of the Italian partisans of the region. It was a situation that had certain disadvantages since he could not take an active hand in the fighting. On the other hand he knew all that was going on at the German headquarters, since he was interned in the same building, and his opponents never dreamed that one of the most successful resistance leaders was sleeping under the same roof as themselves.

When I got on to the boat for Porto Ferraio, I found myself sitting next to a rather taciturn-looking white-haired man, with a tanned face and of muscular build. After talking to him for a while I discovered that it was Gustavo my host, whom I had not seen for twenty years or more. I had always liked him but I had never suspected that the slim young officer in the Bersaglieri could be capable of such resourcefulness, initiative and outstanding courage.

He was sitting with a group of peasants from his village and after a few greetings I was able to devote my attention to the scenery. Looking out from Piombino, Elba fills a large part of the western horizon. In the foreground a range of hills rises to a thousand or fifteen hundred feet and behind, in the distance, looms Mount Capanne with an altitude of over three thousand feet. The light here is as soft as on the Atlantic coast of Ireland and there are none of the clearly defined tones that you find, for instance, at Rapallo or on the French Riviera.

To the south the Gulf of Follonica stretches out to a headland behind which there are more mountains. Beyond are the steep bare cliffs of the Piombino Peninsula. The steamer passes two or three rocky islets and then puts in at the fishing port of Cavo—a handful of little white houses and a small jetty to which are moored a few smacks and schooners. One or two passengers were put ashore in a dinghy and the boat rounded a headland and turned into the Bay of

BY ITALIAN SHORES

Porto Ferraio, the capital of the island which has some twelve thousand inhabitants. A single glance is sufficient to explain why the possession of Elba was always contested by the maritime powers of the Mediterranean. Here is a large and well-sheltered harbour in a fine strategic position next to vast deposits of iron ore.

So, in turn, came the Etruscans, perhaps the Carthaginians and of course the Romans. After the disruption of the empire the Saracens remained there until they were driven out by the Pisans. For centuries, but intermittently, it was under the domination of the Appiani, Lords of Piombino, who were frequently not powerful enough to ward off incursions by the Turks or the Berber raiders. On one occasion the famous pirate Barbarossa, a renegade Christian, landed and sacked many towns and villages, but failed to take Porto Ferraio. This city had passed into the possession of Cosimo who had fortified it and renamed it Cosmopolis.

Early in the seventeenth century the Spaniards annexed Porto Longone and most of the south-west of the island, and held it until 1759 when it was taken over by the Bourbons of Naples.

During the Wars of the Revolution, Nelson used Porto Ferraio as a base for his operations for nine months. He had hopes of establishing British forces there permanently, to counter the advance of the French into Italy. Unfortunately for himself he did not receive the requisite support from George the Third's Government and he was forced to withdraw.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Consulate decreed that Elba was to be a department of the French state, with the privilege of being represented at the Legislative Assembly.

After 1815 the island was restored to the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, largely perhaps because Napoleon's brief stay there had made the allies realize its strategic importance.

Approached from the sea Porto Ferraio was rather impressive. In spite of a few attempts at modernization and some bombing, its aspect must be much the same as it was in May 1814 when Napoleon sailed slowly into the harbour in the British frigate the *Undaunted*.

There were tiers of pinkish houses, some of them with arcaded balconies, in a ring around the harbour. To the docks were moored a few schooners and fishing smacks with their nets drying in the sun. On the right next to the Stella fort could be seen the back of the Casa dei Mulini, the residence chosen by the Emperor during his stay.

The old town is reached by passing through a gateway on the quay to a square beyond which, on the left-hand side, is the town hall. Over the door of this building an inscription states that Napoleon lodged here on his arrival from the mainland. Another tablet records the fact that Victor Hugo spent the first three years of his life at Elba where his father was stationed.

The interior contains a museum of pictures and prints and other objects relating to the history of the island. A large square, surrounded with trees, was used as a parade ground by the Imperial Guard.

Although Porto Ferraio has no great monuments it possesses a certain charm because of its provincial character. So far it has not been commercialised and except on occasions when there are day trips from Grosseto or Florence few tourists are to be seen in its streets.

Ten minutes' walk up a steep alley brings one to the simple villa occupied by the Emperor and his suite. This plain two-storied building with a terrace overlooks the sea. From there Napoleon could watch the shipping passing by and enjoy the splendid prospect of the Bay of Porto Ferraio and of the hills on the far side of it. From the back he could keep an eye on what was happening below in the town and in the harbour. On one side a large room was used as a theatre by Pauline Borghese who loved acting.

Apart from his library, which he gave to the city on setting out for the "Hundred Days", there are no relics of his sojourn.

On my first day I did not linger in the capital. A string of buses was waiting on the quayside to take travellers to outlying places on the island. I clambered into the Marciana bus and was lucky to get a seat for these vehicles are nearly always crowded. The majority of the passengers were Elbans who had been to Piombino or Porto Ferraio for a day's shopping. Like most rural Italians they were a friendly lot, and so within a few minutes they were talking to me and plying me with questions about England. Since the local dialect is akin to Tuscan I had no difficulty at all in understanding what was said to me.

After leaving the old town we passed by the ironworks and a rather sordid industrial district where there were obvious signs of great poverty. This main local industry had been closed down because it was found to be uneconomical and the result has been widespread unemployment. Elba, which had been most prosperous in the past,

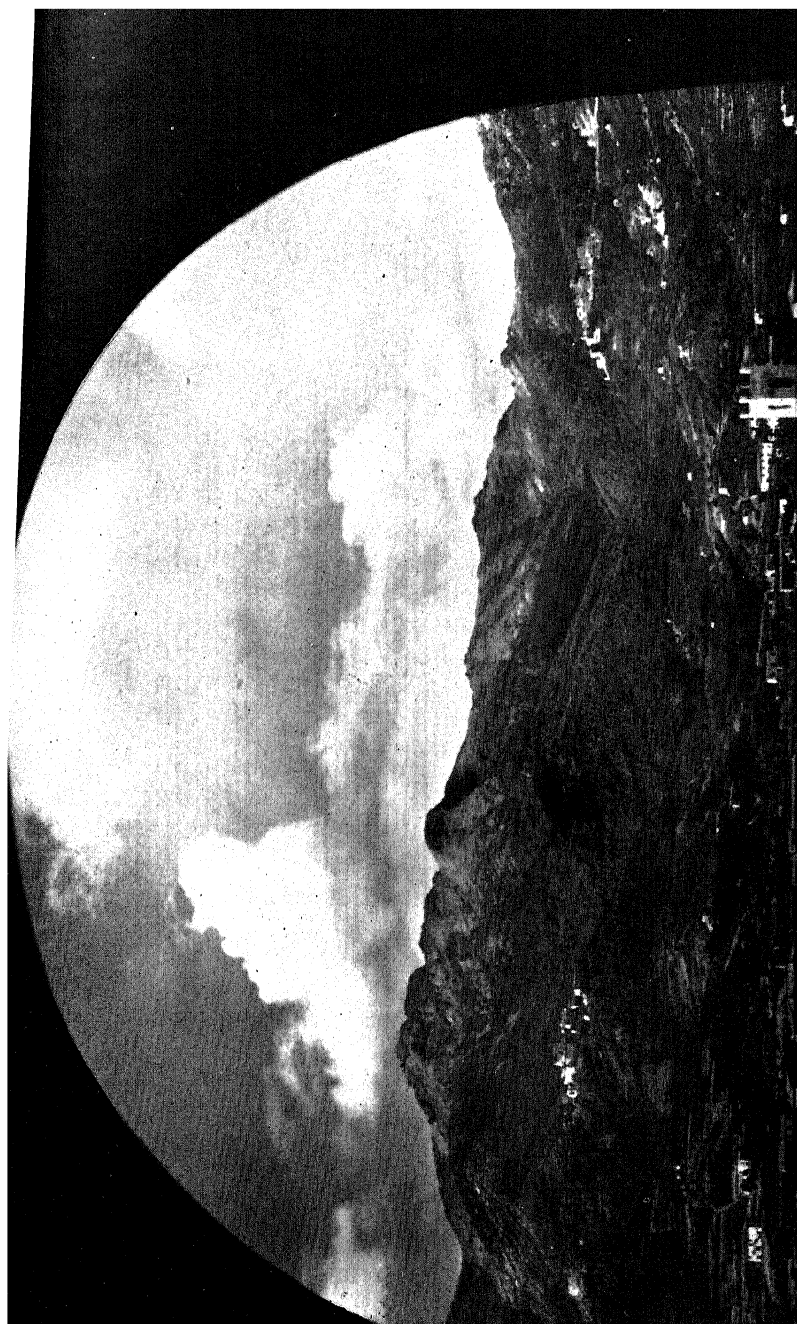
has suffered from a long period of depression. So far the only practical measure that has been proposed to relieve it is to turn Porto Ferraio into a free harbour where goods could be bonded without payment of duty for distribution to all parts of the world.

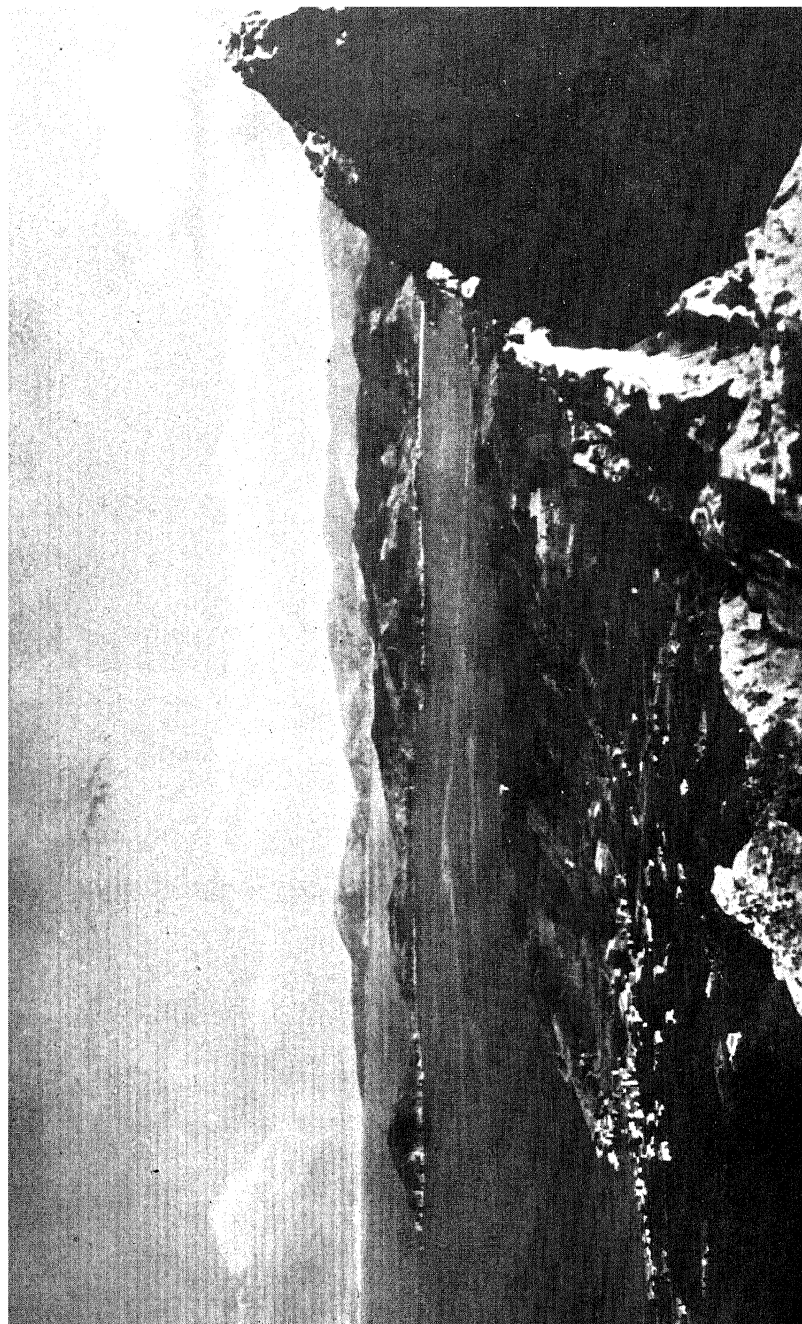
After a three-miles' drive in the open country, the road branches off to the left to the Villa San Martino, Napoleon's summer palace. Like the Mulini it is a low two-storied building of great simplicity with the difference that it stands inland in a park. An avenue of palms leads up to the pleasant house, constructed by Prince Demidoff, husband of the famous Princess Mathilde, daughter of Jerome Bonaparte. Behind it on a terrace the Imperial residence has only a few signs left of its former occupant. On the ground floor a dressing-room contains a stone bath used by the Emperor.

On the next storey the murals in the Egyptian saloon depict episodes of Napoleon's campaign in the east.

Sentiment apart, there is little enough to justify a trip to San Martino. The view of the valley is pleasantly rustic, but compares rather unfavourably with the scenery in many other parts of Elba. The landscape is, in fact, rather a sad one with no outstanding feature to relieve the grey-green of the olives and the rather dusty vegetation. Why the Emperor selected this place to live in is a mystery especially when there were so many other sites available. The problem may have been that there were no large villas and he wished to give the outside world the impression that he was settling down for the rest of his life. So, to hoodwink the spies and observers that watched him closely, he adapted the old warehouse on the hillside into a summer palace.

After passing the fork to San Martino the main road continues to climb to a height of about a thousand feet. Far below us I could see the lovely Bay of Biodola, with a long sandy beach, more or less inaccessible to wheeled traffic. In the four or five miles' curve along the shore, there are perhaps half a dozen little white houses widely separated from each other. On the right the vineyards went down towards the sea. On the left there seemed to be an endless expanse of *maquis*, composed, as in Corsica, of aromatic flowers and bushes. In the early morning and in the evening the mingled scent of hundreds of plants pervades the whole countryside. The undergrowth rises to a height of six or seven feet and is so dense that outlaws can hide in it for months at a time without being tracked down.





In the bus the fragrance was mainly of hot but amiable humanity, so I was definitely relieved when at last we stopped at the hamlet of Procchio where I was to stay. It consists of a couple of dozen houses grouped round the inn kept by the kingpin of the community, a gentleman of the name of Appolonio, whose ancestors at some remote time must have hailed from Greece. A busy man, he runs the café, the post office, a greengrocer's shop and the telephone exchange. He is the only person in the district who can interpret the bus time-table which is, by long tradition, printed with conscious inaccuracy to discourage, it is generally believed, tourists from coming to the island. As I soon found out Elbans are a courteous and hospitable race, but they have a profound distrust of "Continental" as the people from the mainland are called. They will do almost anything rather than sell their land to these outsiders, even when they are offered ten or twelve times its local market value.

Unlike the Sardinians and the Corsicans they are not given to violence, vendettas or blood feuds. They have, in fact, little resemblance to the romantic Italian of legend. To begin with they have little or no ear for music and apart from a few local songs they seem to have no folk lore.

Elbans too have short memories. In other parts of Italy the peasants maintain the traditions of the past and are very conscious of historical events that have influenced the lives of their ancestors. Sicilians, for instance, still talk of the Vespers and even of the administration of their country by the British during the Napoleonic wars. The prevalent mistrust of France in other parts of the peninsula is largely due to the fact that the occupation of Rome by Napoleon the Third's troops in the nineteenth century has not been forgotten.

In Elba, however, the bulk of the population seems to live mainly in the present, even though there are a few intellectuals in each town or village who are keenly interested in the history of the island and have tried to assemble records and documents concerning it.

The fact is, I suppose, that there have been so many invasions and occupations by foreign powers or continentals that the chief pre-occupations have been personal ones, especially now that there are such pressing economic difficulties to be faced.

These comments of mine are of course generalities which apply in varying degrees to each village or district. Communications are still quite difficult. It would be impossible, for instance, to go by bus

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from Marciana in the west to Rio Marina in the east and return on the same day, though the distance is little over fourteen miles each way. Then there are a number of mountain villages and little fishing ports which are only accessible by mule track, and life in these places has remained more or less unchanged. Another interesting feature is that the country that lies to the south of the central ridge still shows some traces of Spanish influence. Most of the peasants' houses have a large round arched entrance to stables under a stairway to the first floor and the front door of the dwelling. The men frequently ride on tiny donkeys on which they sit sideways, whilst their wives come plodding behind them on foot.

On the north side the people appear to be more sophisticated, a circumstance which may be due to the fact that they live near the through road from Marciana to Porto Ferrajo, whereas there is no coastal highway on the south. The northerners, too, are more of a seafaring race and they have the benefit of having far better fishing.

X

A CLOSER VIEW OF ELBA

Procchio. Porto Longone. The Volterraio. The two Marcianas and Poggio.

AFTER SOME weeks of continuous travelling it was pleasant to settle down at Procchio with absolutely no kind of sightseeing to do. The church was a small square building at the end of the garden with a soft-toned little bell, the houses nearby unobtrusive and of no particular architecture. Even the café was a quiet place where the villagers listened to Appolonio discussing politics with the local anarchist, a pleasant and knowledgeable fellow, with the radio blaring in the background. They did not even play Mora, a game almost universal in Italy, which consists of guessing the number of fingers that your opponent will stretch out just as he puts up his hand. It is a pastime that requires a considerable amount of skill and bluff, for an adept will see from a man's face exactly what he is going to do. Also, since the timing is very important, it can and does usually lead to quarrels.

In the village almost every male is called Beppe so each of them has a nickname based on his appearance or personal habits. There is Beppe il Bello and Beppe il Porco, both of them hailed quite openly by their titles. Among the women, one who is bearded is called *la capra*, and another *la putana* though many years have passed since she was a wanton.

An old man who is known as *il papa* (the pope) is the father of *il papete* and his grandson is of course *il papetino*, and their home is the *vaticano*. These rather well-worn jokes are a source of never-ending amusement in a community where newspapers and the radio have little significance. To give the Elban journalists their due, their organ boasts of articles on art, literature and economics—all for the benefit of the thirty thousand inhabitants of the island.

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On occasion, travelling companies give performances at the theatre at Porto Ferraio. This winter there was a presentation of Lucia di Lammermoor in which some of the Highlanders wore kilts over transparent Turkish trousers, and others chastely covered their knees with tights to preserve the decencies. Claymores were thrust through holes in these kilts which, in some cases, were as long as a woman's skirt. It is easy to laugh at these mummers who continue to work for starvation wages, but by their courage and persistence they help to keep the drama alive in Italy and many a great operatic star has been groomed in this hard school.

Staying at Procchio, I did not have much inducement to exploit the night life of Elba, such as it is. In the evening it was more attractive to watch the sea turn gradually to a darker blue, and then to an almost inky shade punctuated by the strings of lights round the seine nets of the fisherman. The tunny season lasts two months only, finishing as a rule at the end of June or at the beginning of July. The trawls used cost anything up to twenty thousand pounds as they are as much as a mile in circumference. The meshes have to be strong as the largest fish weigh over three hundred pounds. It is quite an exciting spectacle to see the catch brought in, but not one for a squeamish stomach as the whole sea is covered with patches of blood.

Some years huge profits are made by the holders of the concessions but one large shark can wreak a terrible amount of havoc. Sixty or seventy years ago a legendary monster had to be chased for over three weeks before it was finally slaughtered in a cave.

There is still a song about this episode which runs something like this:

*We caught a bloody monster,
The biggest fish you ever saw . . .*

Another sport is to spear fish by torchlight, but a strong wrist and great quickness are required to get the quarry. From time to time turtles are caught in the open sea and their flesh is quite frequently on sale in the markets.

The beach at Procchio is sandy, the water clear and very clean. Except in the six weeks of the summer holidays it is practically empty. As in most places on this side of the island, if you swim out

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two or three hundred yards, you can lie back in the tepid sea and get a fine view of the hills and Monte Capanne looming up behind them.

One of the best prospects on Elba is to be had from the Castle of Volterraio, built by the Pisans in the twelfth or thirteenth century as a place of refuge from pirate raids, and now completely deserted. It is constructed with such huge stones that many of the locals believe it to be of Etruscan origin, a conjecture confirmed in their opinion by its name, for the town of Volterra is one of the largest of pre-Roman citadels in the country.

Another place which merits a visit is Porto Longone, shunned by tourists because of its large convict settlement. The local inn, frequented by their relatives, is comfortable, inexpensive and has good food. This town of four thousand inhabitants has its own service of boats with the mainland. It has been renamed in the time-tables Porto Azzurro in the hope of hiding the existence of the penitentiary. It possesses a small harbour, good beaches, some fortifications erected by the Spaniards, and a fine Baroque church built under their occupation. The winter climate on this south part of the island is even milder than at Porto Ferraio for there is shelter from the winds that blow from the snow-covered mountains of the west.

The nearest approach to a real seaside resort is Marina di Campo, also on this coast but practically inaccessible by road from Longone. I walked four miles to this place from Procchio. First there was a climb of about a mile and a half to a ridge with a view northwards to the sea and southwards to a broad valley. On the right there were a number of villages perched high up on the slopes of the hills that rise in tiers to Monte Capanne. On the left a long range of dense *maquis* along which a strategic motorway was constructed during the Second World War. It is now deserted but still practicable for motorists who have the good sense to bring their cars over by the ferry.

Down below the landscape was peaceful and essentially rural. Spanish-looking villages and small farms lay scattered among the olive groves, vineyards and orchards. From time to time, peasants ambled by on donkeys or mules, and though they greeted me courteously enough, none of them sang as they would have done on the mainland in Tuscany or even engaged me in inquisitive conversation. Clearly the admixture of Saracen and Catalan blood has left its

impression on the inhabitants. Without being dour they are silent and reserved, and have none of that joy in making a noise that is characteristic of central Italy.

I enjoyed my walk, for I like to feel the heat seeping through to my bones, and I find a certain pleasure in the faint melancholy of the inland scene, the sad grey-green of the vegetation, the peaks standing out very clearly against a burning blue sky.

At last, after a bend in the road, the sea came into view once more. Campo has a wide sandy bay, lined with trees, and on the west side is the fishing port and the village of no particular character except for the quay to which are moored one or two schooners. There are a few modest cafés and hotels with terraces overlooking the water, and three or four streets.

The harbour is of great antiquity, because it was here that the granite quarried in the cliffs nearby was shipped off to be used for the construction of the Coliseum, the Pantheon, St. John Lateran and the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence and many other buildings of note.

During the two months of the summer season Marina di Campo is frequented by a fair number of tourists from Leghorn, Pisa or Grosseto, with perhaps a sprinkling of foreigners. For the remaining ten months of the year the only visitors are merchants from Genoa and other places in the north who come to buy the wine.

Elban vintages have a great reputation on the mainland. In many restaurants the white wine is sold as a local product, and then there are the dessert wines which are, unfortunately, getting scarce. The Moscato, sweet and amber coloured, is good and the Aleatico, of a clear dark red, is superb. It has many of the qualities of port, but is much lighter and is very digestible. Even in Elba it is hard to procure, for all the stocks are bought up as soon as they are on the market, in spite of the industrialized imitations which are now on sale. On the island, however, no one will drink anything except the genuine product, but it is only to be had in private houses and on occasion at the village of Capoliveri, accessible from Porto Ferraio by bus.

To the west of Marina di Campo is a mountainous district with no roads that are practicable for cars. The villages in this region are of great antiquity, because the successive waves of invaders found them too hard to reach and too poor to be worth troubling about.

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Some time or other, in the spring, I shall hire a mule and explore this district at leisure, working my way right round to Marciana on the north coast by the rough tracks which wind in and out of the chestnut forests. From these tracks there are superb views of the sea, of the Montecristo, of Corsica and of Capraia. I do not mind walking but I do like to provide for sudden changes of temperature and still more for my frequent accesses of hunger and thirst. I like sleeping in the open for, on the coast, as in the rest of the country, mosquitoes have been almost eliminated and flies are far less numerous. Incidentally, it is quite easy to get a clean bed in almost any coast village except in the summertime, though charges are not particularly low by Italian standards.

In places, feeding may be a problem as some taverns are only open in the summertime. There are no really regional specialities, but the food and cooking is much the same as in Tuscany. Fresh tunny prepared in a good many different ways is excellent and the lobsters are unusually large. The best of the local wine is white and rather strong, but a certain number of growers produce vintages of all types for their own consumption.

The most attractive part of Elba is the mountainous region in the west where the scenery is varied and wild.

One of the loveliest drives or walks in all Italy is the trip from Procchio to Marciana Marina. The road for the greater part of the way keeps at a level of about two hundred feet above the sea and follows the winding line of the coast. Just below there are rocky little bays and small sandy inlets with the vegetation coming right down to the water's edge, all in the space of about ten miles. A few hundred yards from Procchio there is a fine view of the bay with the headlands beyond it. On the landward side the dense *maquis* rises steeply, broken here and there by masses of reddish rock.

Just as in other parts of Italy, many villages are duplicated; there is one on the sea for fishing and trading, and a second one built inland to be used as a refuge in case of raids by pirates. Incursions were so frequent in the Middle Ages that many sections were abandoned by the population. In other cases people were driven out of low-lying places by malaria and marsh fevers. Whatever may have been the reason in this particular circumstance, Marciana Alta, situated at least a thousand feet above the level of Marciana Marina, seems to be of far greater antiquity.

Marciana Marina is first seen from the brow of a hill at a bend in the road. A double row of trees lines the waterside together with a narrow strip of white houses with red tiled roofs. Beyond them vineyards curve upwards to a broad belt of chestnuts which encircle Poggio and Marciana Alta on the heights. Above them again the trees disappear and give way to the rocky soil of the mountain peaks.

The little town on the sea level has something of the colouring and feeling of a place on the west coast of Ireland. There is the same impression of a time lag of at least sixty years, and of a population diminished by emigration, and the same sentiment that one is on the edge of a continent, for the coastal road comes to a sudden stop here. Off shore there are usually a few schooners from Ponza, whose crews bring an atmosphere of liveliness by their singing and perpetual movement.

They have few contacts with the people of Marciana who have an instinctive mistrust for these southerners who come to their fishing grounds for the summer season. Besides this the local girls are very pretty and the interlopers are ingratiating and hot-blooded.

A hundred years ago, the harbour was full of shipping which plied to all parts of the Mediterranean and even across the Atlantic. Then the decline set in and many of the inhabitants emigrated to South America. For a good part of the year a fair proportion of those who remain are away at work in the vineyards so, as a rule, the streets of the town seem deserted.

On the front, which is planted with oleander trees, fishermen mend their nets and women sit on the steps of their houses. At the far end of the port there is a stone jetty, and above it, on some rocks, a stone watch tower. About ten miles to the north-west the high craggy ridge of the Island of Capraia can be clearly discerned. The distance gives it a bluish tint which varies in intensity according to the hour of the day. The intervening sea has a soft opaque light which I have never seen elsewhere in Italy.

I could make a long stay at Marciana, for it has the elements that I need to keep me contented: a couple of cafés with terraces from which there is a view of the sea and of the movements of the populace, some knowledgeable people to talk to, and some bathing, fishing and boating. There are no restaurants but the landlords of the trattorie are of the right type, thoroughly interested in good food and drink, and appreciative of customers who share their taste.

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A great-niece of Trelawny's lives on the front. The rooms of her house are decorated with early nineteenth-century frescoes of the romantic type which I find delightful. Sailing ships float across seas of dazzling blue behind a foreground of Roman ruins and mediaeval castles where shepherdesses talk to picturesque mariners. Roughly speaking, these murals look like reproductions of pictures which Turner, Fragonard and Poussin had designed in collaboration for technicolour. The garden at the back is dense with persimmon, pomegranate, oranges, grapes and fruit of all kinds in a riot of purple and red flowers and gardenia trees. It is an amusing contrast to the vistaed walks and formal parterres so prevalent in Italy, and is in complete keeping with the Victorian Baroque of the dwelling.

If the externals of Marciana seem old-fashioned the inhabitants are not. Many of them have been to America or to other distant parts of the world and have returned with some savings. Others have been seamen. Being slightly cosmopolitan they have reasonably advanced ideas on hygiene and no superstitions. As in other parts of Elba, the only people who are interested in the traditions and history of the island are among the middle-class intellectuals.

By contrast the villages on the ten miles of coast to Marina di Campo are reached only by boat. Here more primitive conditions prevail and accommodation for tourists is, to say the least of it, strictly limited. In compensation, most of them are very picturesque and have fine views of Capraia and, in very clear weather, of Corsica.

When it is very hot at Marciana Marina, it is easy to go up to Marciana Alta and to Poggio, for they are only a little over twenty minutes away by bus. At the second of these places there is an up-to-date hotel with its own private bathing beach on the Procchio road. The large terraced garden, about a thousand feet up, has a wide prospect of the bay below. The sloping streets of the village are very clean and at its topmost limits stands a well-kept little inn where meals are served in cool arbours overlooking the port and its surroundings.

From Poggio a level road shaded by chestnut trees goes to Marciana Alta which can be reached in about an hour on foot. About half-way on the left is a fountain, the *Fonte Napoleone*, whose waters are said to have cured the Emperor of some unspecified illness. The medical properties of this spring are now being exploited commercially and, according to the promoters of the business, they are

effective in remedying a large number of diseases. In corroboration of this claim it is only fair to say that the local inhabitants look very healthy and that they do not suffer from bad teeth like most of the Elbans. I have the impression, however, that they drink their own excellent white wine and not much else. In any case, Napoleon did have a table erected near the rill, so that he could stop and rest when he was passing that way.

Marciana Alta, a city dating from Roman times, was rebuilt as a fortress by the Pisans in the eleventh century. The Appiani, formerly Lords of Piombino and Elba, constructed a summer residence here three hundred years later. It is a mansion of fine proportions, but not open to the public as it has been converted into a block of flats.

In the Via delle Fonti there exists a small house which was inhabited for a short while by Madame Letitia Bonaparte, mother of the Emperor.

The greater part of the ramparts has been pulled down but three of the old gates are still standing. It is generally supposed that Marciana was repeatedly sacked by Corsairs, for the ancient church of San Lorenzo, which dates from the reconstruction of the city, was half destroyed by the Turkish pirate Mustapha.

A track continues to rise westward from Marciana to the shrine of Madonna del Monte to which thousands of Elban pilgrims flock every year, and in particular on the 15th of August, Feast of the Assumption. The Virgin of this hermitage is held to heal the sick and to protect those in danger at sea.

According to the legend some shepherds were driving their flocks on the slopes of this mountain, Monte Giove, when to their joy and surprise they saw the lineaments of our Lady depicted on a large slab of granite. Little by little the fame of this miracle grew so much that a chapel was built on the spot where it occurred. Later it was enlarged to its present size.

Napoleon visited this place during one of his tours of inspection of the island. He was enchanted with the beauty of the scenery and especially by the fact that he could see Corsica, the home of his youth.

The hermitage is surrounded by a dense forest of chestnut trees, three or four hundred feet from the summit of Monte Giove. In front of it, water streams out of four fountains into basins of carved stone. A path leads upwards to the *sedia di Napoleone*, Napoleon's

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chair, from which there is a view over the sea to the Tuscan Apennines, Capraia and the peaks above Bastia, snow-capped in the winter and spring.

As the only dwelling available was the house of the watchman of the Shrine, he decided to adapt its five rooms into a simple residence for himself and his staff. Here he could flee from the burning heat of Porto Ferraio and San Martino and get away from the spies of all nations who kept him under constant observation.

On a neighbouring hill he ordered a semaphore to be erected so he could, if need be, get into communication with his compatriots in Corsica.

The hermitage was the scene of the most romantic episode of Napoleon's stay at Elba. For a long time he had hoped and half-expected that the Empress would join him and bring with her their son, the King of Rome. Eventually he decided to alleviate his solitude by sending for Maria Walewska, the Polish countess who had become his mistress in order to induce him to set her country free.

If her motives in giving herself to the Emperor had been disinterested, she soon fell in love with him and her devotion was a lasting one. In order to see him she had to drive down to Naples and charter a ship illegally for Porto Ferraio, where a carriage was sent to fetch her in the dead of night.

At Marciana Alta the Emperor met her and the party continued the journey on horseback by the narrow tortuous path through the woods until they came to the stone cottage where a sumptuous supper was served.

With the countess were her sister, her brother and a four-year-old boy, Alexander, the child of her union with Napoleon. This boy was to be prominent in the Second Empire.

It is difficult to relate precisely what happened during this encounter since the protagonists of this drama each tell a different tale. According to some authorities Maria Walewska spent at least one night in the arms of her former lover. Others declare that he kept her at a distance, since he was afraid that Marie Louise would be informed of any infidelity that he might commit. He was delighted to see his young son and spent hours playing with him.

Beautiful as she was, his mistress clearly did not succeed in recapturing his affections or, at any rate, in making him place them before his ambition to return to the throne. Two days after her

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arrival he informed her that she must leave the island within a few hours and that preparations for her departure had already been made.

Although she saw him three or four times during the "Hundred Days", he showed no signs of wanting to renew their old relationship.

In 1816 she married Count d'Ornano, a French officer of great distinction who had wooed her for many years. Nine months later she died giving birth to his son who survived.

XI

THE TUSCAN ISLANDS

Gorgona. Capraia. Pianosa. Montecristo.

NEVER IN my life have I wished to retire from the cares of the world and hide myself on an island. I have always suffered from the kind of claustrophobia that makes any restriction of my movements very irksome.

Elba suits me very well because it would take me a good many weeks to explore it thoroughly and it has a great variety of scenery. It also has a small capital to go to which breaks the monotony of complete retirement in the country and it is even possible to spend a day on the mainland at Piombino.

The other islands of the Archipelago are far more inaccessible and much smaller though both Capraia and Giglio are rather larger than Capri and have some points of resemblance to it scenically.

I can think of no pleasanter holiday than to go down the west coast of Italy by yacht and cruise gently from Gorgona to the Bay of Naples, stopping at each of these places and taking in the Isles of Ponza and Ischia. It would have to be very fine weather, for the Mediterranean can be rough and cold at very unexpected times and storms arise very suddenly. I have never been more seasick in my life than once when I was crossing from Tunis to Sicily in the month of July. The temperature was as low as in the North Sea in November.

In normal circumstances, however, one can generally rely on clear skies and calm seas from May to October, except for a short stormy period usually in the second or third week in September.

Away from the coast, the climate is, in general, rather milder both in winter and summer than on the mainland and the light and colouring are softer.

BY ITALIAN SHORES

The B.E.A. services from Rome to London pass over this part of the Tyrrhenian Sea in the course of one of the most varied and pleasant flights in any part of the world.

At the Italian airport there is always that astonishing and sudden feeling of transition from one country to another that you get on entering a British plane in a foreign land. Before stepping on to the gangway you are in Italy, but as soon as you have climbed it you are back in Britain in a leisurely atmosphere of comfort.

A few minutes after taking off you are over Rome with all its monuments clearly defined in the bright sunshine. First the Appian Way with its tombs and cypresses cleaving into the Campagna and the rather melancholy ruins of the aquaduct just to the north of it. Then the Church of St. John Lateran, the Coliseum and the Forum which are just as impressive when seen from above. Beyond, on the left, there are the green hills of the Janiculum. To the right, the Pincio and the Borghese gardens make a sombre mass of verdure. In between, the graceful curves of Bernini's Colonnade in front of St. Peter's appear to best advantage. It is as if the architect had realized that the time would come when thousands of people would view his masterpiece from an altitude of four or five thousand feet.

The ideal method of doing this part of the flight would be, I suppose, by helicopter, and to hover slowly rather lower down, for from the air it is possible to get a comprehensive prospect of all that is left of the Imperial City. One can visualize it as it must have been a century or so after Augustus, with its principal buildings faced with white marble and the dome of the Pantheon with its copper sheath gleaming like a jewel in the centre. Here and there were piazzas, theatres, huge circuses and, down the Tiber, the red sails of the galleys drifting on past Ostia.

The open, desolate-looking plains of the Campagna soon appeared, succeeded almost immediately by arid, practically treeless, mountains. Then the coast with Civita Vecchia and its harbour only half full of small ships that look like toys, and beyond it the vast expanse of the Mediterranean, dazzlingly blue, fading into a misty horizon. On the right side, the promontory of Orbetello has the strange design of a symbolic painting, for it is linked up to the mainland by two streamlined spits of land that enclose a big lagoon. Giannutri, the first island to be sighted, is long and narrow with many inlets. From above it looks like a beetle running over the surface of the water.

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Giglio, a little farther away, and to the north-west of the peninsula, is far more clearly defined. It has a small harbour and, going up from it, a white road that leads to the fortified village on the heights. As I have already stated, it is rather like Capri but without its hotels and scattered villas and also without its fleet of excursion steamers anchored off the Marina.

I have never been able to get a proper view of the rocks and crags of Montecristo from the air, mainly, I think, because I have always been straining on the other side to get the first glimpse of the mountains of Elba, massed to the north. Just as they come into sight, the plane passes over Pianosa which is so flat as to be almost unnoticeable except when one is right over it. From this angle one sees a geometric pattern of field, orchards and *maquis*, intersected by a couple of roads. On one side lies a village and a block of buildings.

The hills of Napoleon's island stand out in varying shades of purple with deep patches where there are bays and inlets. Even from a distance one can discern houses strung out like white dice along the shore.

The plane usually passes not far from the western extremity where the land slopes steeply down to the sea from Monte Capanne, and one can sometimes perceive the dark green of the chestnut woods that surround the Emperor's hermitage. Capraia then appears on the right, another rocky hump of the same pattern as Giglio and Capri, though the villages and port are out of view for they are on the far side.

By this time, far away on the left, the mountains of Corsica loom up out of wreathes of blue-grey mist. More often than not their peaks are capped with snow. Their outline is jagged and irregular, and in places a summit rises high above the rest of the range. This landscape is one that can be seen elsewhere in the Mediterranean, in the Adriatic, the Aegean or off the coast of Anatolia, but here the light has a different texture, the tints are fuller for the Atlantic is nearer.

With surprising suddenness the sea becomes a void once more to the west, but to the north the littoral of the Riviera surges up from the water, spreading out unendingly. First the hills of Vintimiglia with the solid wall of the Alps behind them, then Monte Carlo, the Castle of Monaco on its promontory succeeded by Cap Ferrat, a long tongue of forest gardens and villas closing in the deep Gulf of Villefranche, where warships are often at anchor. At last the plane

sweeps down past the Bay of Nice, close to the palm trees of the Promenade des Anglais with its serried rows of white hotels, and glides gently on to the aerodrome near the beach where countless people are sunbathing. There is just thirty minutes' wait to be spent on the terrace of the airport café, watching passengers being herded by air hostesses to different destinations. Beyond the fence high-powered cars move swiftly on their way to Cannes, Antibes or Marseilles. It is hard to realize that in two or three hours' time we shall be trundling through the suburbs on towards the centre of London, held up every few minutes by traffic lights or majestic policemen. . . .

In contrast to this modern method of seeing the world, a small and rather antiquated steamer leaves Leghorn every Tuesday morning at seven-thirty, and goes in a leisurely fashion to Gorgona, Capraia, Marciana and Porto Ferraio where it stops for the night. On the next day it proceeds to other Elban ports and on to Pianosa which it reaches two hours after leaving Marina di Campo. A delightful trip for those who are not afraid of seasickness and one that has its compensations. Even if you are not going to one of the smaller islands, it is highly practical to be able to land at Marciana without having to battle for a place on a crowded motor bus at Porto Ferraio. According to the time-tables passengers may break their journey anywhere for business purposes, but I must add that accommodation at Gorgona, Capraia and Pianosa is very limited. However, in the summertime, it would seem to me quite a good risk to take, for the word impossible does not seem to exist in the vocabulary of a Latin country. With a little ingenuity all human problems can be solved provided one is not too fastidious. Almost everywhere villagers are prepared to let rooms to passing tourists, but the Archipelago is growing in popularity as a resort and all available beds may be occupied.

Many travellers going southward on the Rome express must have seen Gorgona from the train shortly after leaving Leghorn. Its rocky outline rises out of the sea like the carapace of a huge tortoise. From a distance it looks arid and deserted, like so many other Mediterranean islands, though on closer inspection they frequently turn out to be fertile and populated.

Gorgona, which is about twenty miles from Leghorn, has a circumference of seven kilometres and a maximum altitude of about eight hundred feet. It was probably inhabited by the Etruscans and

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there are certainly a few remains to testify to occupation by the Romans.

During the Barbarian invasions, monks of different orders came from the mainland and from Sardinia to take refuge on the island. Inevitably the Saracens came later and sacked the monastery constructed by the Benedictines. They in their turn were expelled by the Pisans who erected fortifications to protect themselves both from the Muslims and the Genoese who were by now beginning to be serious rivals.

When Pisa declined, the Medici Grand Dukes took a mild interest in bringing peasants here from the mainland but with indifferent results, though pines, cypresses, olives and chestnuts were planted.

Shortly after the Unification of Italy a penal settlement was established with the intention that the convicts should be more or less self-supporting by farming the land. The penitentiary still exists, but there is besides a population of about a hundred and twenty ordinary civilians. Access to Gorgona from the steamer is by boat as there is no harbour. Like all the other islands of the Tyrrhenian, it is a resting place for the myriads of migrating birds that fly across the Mediterranean from North Africa every spring.

Capraia, thirty miles away, is five miles long and two and a half miles in breadth. A range of hills twelve hundred feet high traverses its whole length, steep to the west and sloping gently down on the eastward side to a narrow plain. Somewhere near the centre a broad valley opens out on to the port, where there is a row of houses on a quay to which are moored some fishing smacks. A motor bus service plies to the *paese* (seven hundred inhabitants) by a road that follows the bend of the bay. The inn here has a fair number of rooms.

Another road leads to the penitentiary, inland and beyond it, to a lake in a crater.

The history of Capraia is much the same as that of the other islands of the Archipelago, except that there existed Christian settlements here as early as the fourth century.

In the eleventh century it was occupied by the Saracens. It must have been liberated shortly afterwards, for the inhabitants manned and equipped a galley that participated in the First Crusade.

Later came annexation by the Corporation of the Bank of San Giorgio of Genoa, from which it passed into the hands of the Serene Republic. The Genoese constructed the Castle of San Giorgio on a

rock, not far from the *paese*, as a refuge against incursions by the Barbary Corsairs.

In 1796 came a strange interlude when Capraia was occupied for a few months by a detachment of Nelson's fleet, but the English had to give way to the French who held it until 1814.

Under the Sardinians it was for a while a free port and enjoyed a brief period of prosperity, only to relapse into poverty when this concession was withdrawn. There are, or there were until quite recently, a number of houses and watch towers falling into ruins which could be bought for a few pounds, but since islands have come into fashion prices have risen considerably.

From the heights there are splendid views of Elba on one side and of Corsica on the other. On clear days a panorama of a wide stretch of the mainland can also be had.

There is a certain amount of cultivation, especially of vines, olives and wheat, but only around the *paese* and the penitentiary; the rest consists of *maquis* or of barren stony soil.

The coast, in the main rocky and steep, is full of grottoes where seals abound in some years. The trip round the island by rowing boat takes about half a day and to Marciana, about ten miles away, rather less. Strange to say, the people of Capraia have little or no affinity with their neighbours of Elba. They have more in common with the Corsicans and have the same tradition and legends and something of the same mystic spirit.

The Elbans on the contrary are rationalists, devoid of superstition and are not interested in their history, though they are proud of their island and do not care particularly for the "Continentalists" until they have established the fact that they are worthy of esteem.

The Corsicans view all interlopers with the greatest resentment, and dwell on the past. The origin of many vendettas goes back centuries and the motives that started them have, in some cases, even been forgotten. That aspect of their character is sufficiently well known. Other traditions are less notorious but, in fact, far more interesting.

For instance, even in the present day, the dead are dressed in their best clothes and exposed to the public gaze on a bier surrounded by lighted candles to keep away the evil spirits. Relations and friends of the deceased come in turn and extemporize poetical dirges called *vocero*, lamenting their demise, praising their virtues and affirming

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their affection. Unlettered peasants frequently express themselves on these occasions in language of the highest lyrical quality, with a wealth of well-chosen words and great sincerity.

The people of Capraia have the same custom but they call these funeral orations *il pianto dei parenti*. I have never assisted at one of these ceremonies which seem to have much in common with Irish wakes and are probably of Iberian and not of Celtic origin.

Pianosa, ten miles south of Elba, another penal settlement, cannot be visited without a permit from the Ministry of the Interior in Rome. As its name indicates it is flat and its highest point rises only a hundred feet above the level of the sea. As a resort it has no attractions whatsoever as there is no accommodation to be had there and the scenery is dull. Moreover, it is very hot though the winter climate is even milder than in Elba. It is three and a half miles long by three in breadth.

If Pianosa holds no kind of interest for the ordinary tourist it has some features to arrest the attention of specialists. There are numerous fossil deposits here of bears, antelopes, donkeys and stags dating from the period when the island was part of the mainland.

In Roman times the place was thickly populated, for remains indicate that there were large villas, temples, theatres and baths here. The redoubtable Livia, wife of Augustus, sent Agrippa the younger here in exile, and then had him liquidated to assure the succession of the Imperial throne for her own children.

With the decay of the empire Pianosa was gradually abandoned to peasants and fishermen, who were in turn under the domination of the Pisans and the Genoese. In the sixteenth century the Corsairs kidnapped the entire population which was sold on the slave markets of Turkey.

Sailors of the English fleet landed here in 1809 and blew up a tower, which had been garrisoned by the French troops of Elisa Bacciochi, who had become Princess of Piombino.

In 1814 Napoleon, anxious to make Elba self-sufficient economically, annexed Pianosa which had by then been completely abandoned. He set out to grow wheat there as the grain production of his realm was insufficient for its needs. The soldiers that he sent to do this work were far from satisfied with the isolated lives that they had to lead on their desert island and were in a constant state of mutiny. The penal colony, established in 1857, was to continue the Emperor's

plan of agricultural development for it was organized to produce all its own food and did, at one time, export wine, grapes and other fruit.

Montecristo, thirty miles to the south of Elba, and the same distance from the coast, has no established system of communications and can only be visited with permission of the Ministry of the Interior. It is about the same size as Pianosa, but with this difference that it is hilly, having three craggy peaks of about two thousand feet in height.

Its history in remote times is a little obscure. According to legend, San Mamiliano, a popular saint in the islands, took refuge here after having been driven away from Sicily by the Vandals. A grotto which he occupied was converted into a chapel now in ruins. He and his companions built a hermitage which was later expanded into a monastery where his ashes were buried. In the ninth century his remains were transferred to the Cathedral of Civita Vecchia by order of the Pope, Leo IV.

In 1110 the Saracens occupied the island and destroyed the monastery which was, however, rebuilt by Benedictines when, during an interlude, the Pisans established themselves.

Eventually, constant raids by African pirates made the place untenable and the monks and other inhabitants withdrew to Cosmopolis which had been recently fortified by the Tuscan Grand Dukes. From then onwards Montecristo has been more or less deserted.

In 1814 Napoleon came down from Porto Ferraio to see whether it would be worth while establishing a garrison here to increase the size of his diminutive state. He came to the conclusion that the place was too barren to cultivate and too remote to have any strategic value.

Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century, several people in turn sought and obtained sanction to try to develop its agricultural resources. One of these was a Frenchman who may have given Dumas some of the material for his book *The Count of Montecristo*.

Undoubtedly, for centuries, pirates of different nationalities had used the island as a base, and had in all probability concealed their booty in some of the numerous grottoes that are hidden in the rocks of its steep shores.

As late as 1848 news came that a Sardinian schooner had been seized on the high seas near Spezia and that the crew had been

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slaughtered. An expedition sent off from Leghorn discovered the perpetrators of this outrage in a cave on Montecristo with their spoil and took them back to the mainland where they were executed as pirates.

In 1852 the island was leased to an Englishman named George Green Taylor, who toyed with the idea of turning it into a resort for gambling like Monte Carlo. He built himself a comfortable house where he lived for some years attended by a large staff of servants and in the company of a beautiful mistress. Being romantically disposed he called himself the Count of Montecristo. Conceivably he hoped to find the immense treasures that were supposed to be buried in his domains, or at any rate get some return for his outlay from the vineyards that he had had planted. In any case, he became bored with the place, especially after a contingent of Garibaldi's men wrecked some of his sheds when they landed there on their way to reinforce the "Thousand" in Sicily.

Green Taylor was very annoyed and reported the affair to the Foreign Office. The British Government sent out a warship, and Septembrini, the captain of the ship transporting the culprits, was arrested and taken to Malta though he was released soon afterwards.

Thirty years later King Victor Emmanuel III took over Montecristo for sporting purposes. The villa was enlarged and adapted to its new function as a royal shooting box. Wild boar and mouflon (the Corsican mountain sheep) were brought to the island and allowed to breed.

XII

THE MAREMMA AND THE ISLAND OF GIGLIO

*Follonica and the Maremma. Massa Marittima. Grosseto. Vetulonia.
Orbetello. Giglio. Giannutri.*

THE TUSCAN Maremma stretches along the coast right the way down to Orbetello where the Roman Maremma begins. Both are lowlying districts, formerly marshy, with vast tracts of forest and scrub. Shepherds used to bring their flocks down from the mountains for winter grazing and retire once more to the uplands for the summer. Their dogs, a special breed known as the "Maremma", are white, inclined to be fierce, and not unlike the Newfoundland but rather smaller.

Before the reclamation and draining of recent years, the Maremma abounded with game especially wild boar, which have not entirely disappeared. The whole region was very unhealthy because of malaria and ague, so much so that travellers of the past preferred to avoid it altogether and turn inland at Pisa, or to take a ship to Civita Vecchia from Leghorn, if they were on their way to Rome.

In the present day different industries have been developed in places like Cecina, Follonica and Grosseto, and many of the lead and copper mines, formerly exploited in the Middle Ages, have been reopened along the coast and in the hill cities inland.

At first sight a great many of the places on this road seem to be devoid of interest and marred by ugly works and factories, but most would repay closer inspection were it not for the greater attraction of the countryside to the north and to the south.

To the east are hills on which perch ancient towns where accommodation is primitive but which have a wealth of well-preserved mediaeval and Etruscan remains.

Suvereto, for instance, only eight miles from Campiglia Marittima,

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has a thirteenth-century Palazzo Communale, a Romanesque church, and a large part of its ramparts are still more or less intact. On a rocky crag nearby there is a fourteenth-century castle in good condition.

Follonica, on the main line to Rome, has a large beach and pine-woods, but is too industrialized to call for attention.

I have, on one or two occasions, turned inland here to go to Siena by a secondary road which is exacting to almost any driver.

Massa Marittima, at the nineteenth kilometre, was a prosperous town in the early Middle Ages, an independent republic whose citizens waged war on the Pisans and the Sienese, but which was eventually dominated by the latter. Its prosperity declined when the population was so decimated by malaria that the city was virtually abandoned.

Although this town has not the amenities of places like Siena or Perugia it is a very good example of the small urban state of mediaeval times, complete with all its monuments and buildings dating from before the Renaissance.

The old town is mainly Romanesque and the new town higher up is Gothic. In the centre are to be found the remains of a huge fortress constructed by the Sienese when they captured Massa. There remain one or two fine palaces, a Romanesque Palazzo del Podesta, later the seat of the *Capitani di Giustizia*, and a Palazzo Communale which has a thirteenth-century tower. The cathedral, of the Pisan school of architecture, is distinguished chiefly by the Arca di San Cerbone, carved by the Sienese Goro di Gregorio, and depicting scenes of the saint's life; how the envoys of the Pope came to him and summoned him to Rome; how he milked some cows on his journey and how he presented a goose to the Pontiff on his arrival. Other pictures, carvings and windows represent episodes in the career of the patron of the town and are of great interest though they are too numerous to be described here.

Although Massa is a mining town, it has kept its primitive form, having gates, some strips of rampart and many houses dating from the time of its former splendour. There is an old mint (*zecca*), and the Palace of Abundance set over a loggia and fountain used in the days of the republic as a granary, and some Gothic mansions.

The road to Siena continues over hilly and rather melancholy country, passing through olive orchards and forests broken at times

by mining installations and at others by ruins of monasteries and castles. Often the scenery is as romantic and desolate as eighteenth-century engraving illustrations of the Castle of Otranto; then there is a sudden return to the twentieth century.

Castiglione della Pescaia, on the far side of the promontory to the south of Follonica, is in pinewoods by the sea. From the heights just behind it there is a rather unusual view of the east coast of Elba. The castle, on a hill, is very massive and in an excellent state of preservation. Being off the beaten track this small resort is frequented only for six weeks in the summer by the people of Grosseto, Massa or Siena. At other times this place would make quite a pleasant break in a long day's motoring for anyone not looking for chromium plate and luxury.

Grosseto, the capital of the Tuscan Maremma, stands in the midst of land that has been reclaimed from the marshes. In the Second World War the Allies had projected a landing there, and prepared for it by some preliminary bombardments. Fortunately none of its major buildings was damaged.

At an early stage in its history this town was repeatedly attacked by the Sienese who were trying to acquire a port as an outlet for their products. When Siena was annexed by Florence, Grosseto shared its fate. Like Massa, it fell into a complete state of decay because of the ravages of malaria, which disappeared when the marshes in the neighbourhood were drained, first by the Medici, then on a far larger scale by the Grand Dukes of the House of Lorraine in the eighteenth century.

The solid ramparts and the citadel, still intact, were constructed like those of Lucca in the sixteenth century. The spaces within the large bastions have been turned into public gardens. The walk round these walls is a pleasant one with good views of the Maremma, the sea and the mountains.

The cathedral, much restored and altered, is of secondary interest except for a wooden crucifix of the fifteenth century in one of the chapels. The paintings of the interior are by indifferent artists of the period of decadence that succeeded the early Renaissance.

The *Museo d'arte sacra* contains mainly paintings and carvings of the Sienese school. These are of doubtful attribution and few, if any, are by great masters, though one or two are attractive.

The Archaeological Museum is devoted to objects found in the

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region dating from Roman and pre-Roman times. The best exhibits are Etruscan vases with the usual black figures on a red background, household utensils and terracottas. The library attached to it contains full records of life in Tuscany in the past three centuries of value mainly to students.

Grosseto is not strictly speaking a town of great beauty. Its civic monuments were constructed for the greater part in the nineteenth century and are only in moderate good taste. This rather melancholy place is expanding now because of a few industries and the richness of the reclaimed land. The one impressive feature, the fortifications, preserve for it something of its ancient aspect as a frontier city and capital of a strange and rather isolated district.

Some way back on the Follonica-Grosseto highway, a byroad leads to Vetulonia about six miles inland. This village, on heights of twelve hundred feet in altitude, was constructed from the stones of the Etruscan ruins nearby. Tumuli, large hillocks, conceal remains of a vast necropolis from which were excavated many of the principal exhibits now in the Topographical Museum in Florence.

Vetulonia has the distinction of being the first place to use the fasces of the lictors, the purple toga, the curule chair and other insignia of the Roman magistrates of Etruscan origin.

The remains are doubtless of a greater interest to archaeologists than to the ordinary layman, but the atmosphere of the remote past still lingers here. The setting is identical, the houses have something of the structure of primitive times and are built with the same material. Occasionally the features of some of the inhabitants are as clear cut as those of the men and women depicted with such grace on the funeral urns of their ancestors.

The Etruscans were so completely submerged by their conquerors that it is always surprising to note how many traces of their civilization can still be found in Italy. Quite apart from the huge fortress at Volterra, and the gates at Perugia, there are still countless, but usually remote, places where their handiwork can be seen. The Romans, I suppose, followed the usual practice of imperialists and decried those they had defeated and supplanted. Nevertheless, one is frequently conscious of the Etruscan influence in the more lonely parts of Umbria and Tuscany. It is not perhaps due to the scattered ruins that have survived the centuries so much as to the feeling that their spirits still haunt the remains of their ancient cities, their abandoned cemeteries

and the hilltops where they made their habitations. According to legend, like the Romans, the Etruscans came from Asia Minor, being descended from Lydians, whose King, Tyrrhenus, led them to this part of Italy after the fall of Troy.

The present village of Vetulonia may or may not be the site of the town of the same name. How or why this region came to be so deserted has never been fully explained. Certainly, when cultivation was neglected, the rank growth of vegetation was bound to breed malaria. So deadly was this scourge that a hundred years ago a place like Follonica had no more than a dozen inhabitants, after May 1st when the fevers became prevalent. George Dennis, author of *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*, describes this district as it was in 1842 in the following terms :

"My road lay through the level of the Maremma, where for some miles everything was in a state of primitive nature ; a dense wood ran wild over the plain ; it could not be called a forest, for there was scarcely a tree twenty feet in height ; but a tall underwood of tamarisk, lenticus, myrtle and dwarf cork trees, and numerous shrubs unknown to me, fostered by the heat and moisture into an extravagant luxuriance and matted together by parasitical plants of various kinds. . . .

"Habitations there were none in this wilderness, save one lonely house on rising ground. If a pathway opened into the dense thickets on either hand, it was the track of the wild beasts of the forest. Man seemed to have no dominion here. The boar, the roebuck, the buffalo and wild cattle have undisputed range of the jungle. It was 'the woods and wasteness' wide of this Maremma, that seized Dante's imagination when he pictured the Infernal wood inhabited by the souls of suicides."

Like their descendants of the Middle Ages, the Etruscans built their cities on the heights and avoided the plain except for the coast where they had numerous ports. For some centuries, they were supreme in the western Mediterranean, and their fleets held off the Greeks and the Carthaginians until the fifth century B.C.

To-day it is mainly on the hillsides that there are to be found remains of their passage, especially in the deserted ranges of southern Tuscany, Umbria and in the Lazio north of Rome. It is there that tombs are still discovered with murals of exquisite grace depicting the sports, the religious rites and the customs of two thousand five

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hundred years ago. Frequently the excavators find mirrors, household implements and other objects of delicate workmanship and beautiful design such as those that can be seen in the Etruscan Museum in Rome. Yet the strange thing about it is that we know very little about this race which lived at a time when there were many historians to record what they did. Their Latin contemporaries viewed them with contempt, and those who wrote about them had little regard for accuracy. Years after they had been subjected and assimilated, the Emperor Claudius wrote a history of the Etrurians in twenty volumes, but what he set down in it no one can tell, for no copy of it has survived.

Talamone, now a small town, was a port in Etruscan and Roman times. For a while the Sieneese tried to make it into a harbour that would compete with Genoa for the trade of the western Mediterranean. One of the ships of Garibaldi's expedition landed here to collect food and arms. He also wanted to give the impression that he was about to invade the Papal States in order to distract the attention of the Great Powers from his real purpose.

It is situated on a promontory that faces the Peninsula of Orbetello which is dominated by the solid mass of Monte Argentario. Out at sea, the Island of Giglio can be clearly discerned, for it is not more than twelve miles away. On a rock above Talamone there are the ruins of a fifteenth-century castle from which there is a good prospect of the bay.

Albinia, a few miles farther south, is a small commercial town of no great interest. From this place a road branches inland to Magliano, one of the best preserved mediaeval cities in Italy, with a complete ring of ramparts, bastions and towers. It has many ancient houses, a fifteenth-century town hall and quaint streets. Since it is right off the beaten track, it has no sophisticated amenities, no chromium-plated restaurants or modern hotels. Life there has changed little in the space of three or four hundred years, except for the bus service that plies daily to the coast.

Orbetello is situated on a strip of land in the centre of a lagoon enclosed by two narrow tongues of sand that run out from the coast to Monte Argentario, which must at one time have been an island. Since it has one or two sluices connected with the sea, this lagoon, which is from three to six feet deep, never dries up. It teems with all kinds of fish, including eels, always considered a great delicacy in this country especially by the Romans.

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The town is surrounded on three sides by a sea wall of huge blocks of stone, built, according to some authorities, in pre-Etruscan times. Whether this assumption is correct or not, there always remains the mystery, here as elsewhere, as to how these enormous weights were transported and lifted into place.

Apart from these curious remains, Orbetello has some fortifications erected by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century and a fourteenth-century cathedral. The Etruscan Museum contains a collection of objects found in the tombs of the district, and more especially at Cosa on the mainland, three miles away to the east.

This is in some ways one of the best preserved of the Etrurian cities. Set on a hill by the sea, it survived the Barbarian invasions and here Charlemagne disembarked troops. Later it was occupied by the Saracens, and subsequently fell into decay.

Cosa, or Ansedonia as it is now called, has a circumference of just over a mile and is surrounded by a wall from twelve to thirty feet in height. Fourteen flanking towers are still standing. At the highest point rise the ruins of the Acropolis protected by a rampart. Within the whole area, nothing remains except some heaps of rubble whose original purpose it is hard to distinguish.

Even to those who are not interested in archaeology Cosa is worth a visit. The landscape is unusual, for from here Orbetello can be seen in its lagoon with Monte Argentario beyond it and, out to sea, the islet of Giannutri.

Ten miles from Orbetello, on the north side of the main peninsula, lies Porto San Stefano, a town of about seven thousand inhabitants, backing on mountains with slopes terraced for olive orchards and vineyards. There are two bathing beaches here and some unpretentious hotels and pensions. Behind on the heights stands a castle built by the Spaniards.

There is a railway connecting Orbetello with Porto San Stefano, and from thence a steamer goes once a day to Giglio, the second largest island of the Tuscan Archipelago, about eight miles from Monte Argentario.

Like Capri, it is surrounded with rocks and cliffs, with a hill rising to an altitude of eighteen hundred feet. It is nearly five and a half miles long and close on four miles across at its broadest point.

Giglio Porto has about a thousand inhabitants, mainly sardine fishers, whose boats are moored in the small harbour. A winding

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road leads up to Giglio Castello, four miles away and twelve hundred feet up in the hills. This little town is surrounded by ramparts. Its steep narrow streets have arches at intervals connecting the granite houses, which date back to the Middle Ages. Higher up is the Rocca, a fortress constructed in the fifteenth century.

The island was inhabited from earliest times, but thanks to its inaccessibility it escaped raids from the Saracens after the disintegration of the Roman Empire. It was occupied for two centuries by the Pisans, then for a short while by the Aragonese, who had it colonized by some hundreds of Neapolitans. After various vicissitudes it passed eventually to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in whose possession it remained. In the sixteenth century the pirate Barbarossa carried away a large number of the islanders and sold them as slaves in North Africa.

The most dramatic event in the history of Giglio was when it was attacked by two thousand Tunisians in the year 1799. According to some records, three or four hundred of the enemy landed and made their way up to the Castello, where they were driven back by the fire of the villagers who defended themselves with great courage.

The ships which attacked the Porto were also repelled. Eventually the invaders, discouraged, withdrew having suffered heavy losses. Reports came through a Genoese slave, who escaped from captivity, that over three hundred of them had been killed or wounded. There is another version of this battle which is perhaps less creditable and must assuredly have originated at San Stefano, whose population is of rather cynical turn of mind.

In this case it is suggested that the Tunisians, being thirsty, made for the cellars of the vineyards and helped themselves lavishly from the barrels they found there. Being Muslims, and unaccustomed to alcoholic drinks, they soon became thoroughly inebriated on the excellent but heady wine of Giglio.

When they reeled up towards Castello, they saw to their horror someone waving the withered arm of San Mamiliano, patron saint of the island, whose limb has been preserved through the centuries as a relic in the parish church.

I am inclined to set down this second story as a piece of ill-will concocted by jealous mischief-makers. After all, there is a tablet to commemorate the courage of the Gigliese on this occasion though I must admit that they put it up themselves.

BY ITALIAN SHORES

From the higher points of the island there are splendid views of the Tuscan coast, Monte Argentario, Montecristo and Giannutri. The locals make the inevitable claim that they can see Corsica on a clear day. A good part of Giglio is cultivated and produces fine grapes. There are also some pinewoods but the southern extremity is mainly covered with *maquis*.

So far, Giglio has not been developed for tourists, mainly because the small steamer from San Stefano arrives there at six o'clock in the evening, and does not leave again until seven-thirty the next morning. There is one very small inn at the Porto which is booked for the entire summer, months in advance. Other accommodation is to be found only in the fishermen's houses, and that only by introduction from the landowner's agent. Of recent years a number of Romans have been coming here for the bathing, and now a big hotel is in course of erection.

Scenically and climatically the place is delightful. There are some good bathing beaches, a large variety of landscapes in a small compass and pleasant architectural features. The people are good-looking, clean and honest. They are healthy because their ancestors have lived in an area that was free from Malaria.

I should certainly like to spend a few weeks in Giglio in May or June when I could have the whole island to myself. Since it is only five hours by train and boat from Rome, it can easily be reached in one day's journey from London or Paris by taking the early morning plane.

I am not, however, enamoured of islands as a rule. I could, in all probability, be just as happy at Port 'Ercole on the peninsula, only four miles by bus from Orbetello. It is a small fortified city on a promontory facing southwards towards Civita Vecchia. Its origins go back to Roman times as its name indicates and, like the rest of the district, it was occupied for a while by the Spaniards who built the castle on the heights.

At the back are the hills grouped round Monte Argentario the highest of which rises to over eighteen hundred feet high. Beyond Port 'Ercole the coast is still undeveloped, so that there is really room to move about.

The excursion to Giannutri is not a very easy matter for, first of all, permission to land must be obtained from the proprietor who is well-known in the Orbetello district. Then, since there are no

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public transport services to the island, it is necessary to charter a boat either at Giglio or Port 'Ercole. The round trip is one of twenty miles or more.

It is, at present, uninhabited for the greater part of the year as the present owner bought it because of the shooting. In the late nineteenth century, vines and fruit trees were planted there by an ex-officer, who spent a hermit-like existence on the island with his ward.

Apart from this, the main point of interest is to be found in the ruins of a Roman villa and its dependencies, as well as the remains of a port belonging to the same period. Giannutri is the smallest island of the Tuscan Archipelago, for it is only a mile and a half long from north to south.

XIII

CITIES OF ETRURIA

Tarquinia (Corneto). Tuscania (Toscanella). Bolsena.

A FEW miles beyond Orbetello a close observer would notice a subtle difference in the architecture, the cultivation and the manners of the inhabitants. This change is easily explained by the fact that the northern boundaries of the Papal States were here until they were incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy in 1870. These invisible frontiers are tending to disappear, as I stated previously, but they do still exist, though there are few people alive to-day who can remember even the last phases of the Risorgimento.

Years ago, I met one or two individuals who were opposed to the unification of their country on the grounds that it was detrimental to regional culture and traditions and that it had been followed by an increase in the cost of living. They would have preferred to see a federation, and that is what the separatists in Sicily and Sardinia are still asking for at the present time. It is most improbable that their aspirations will be fully satisfied.

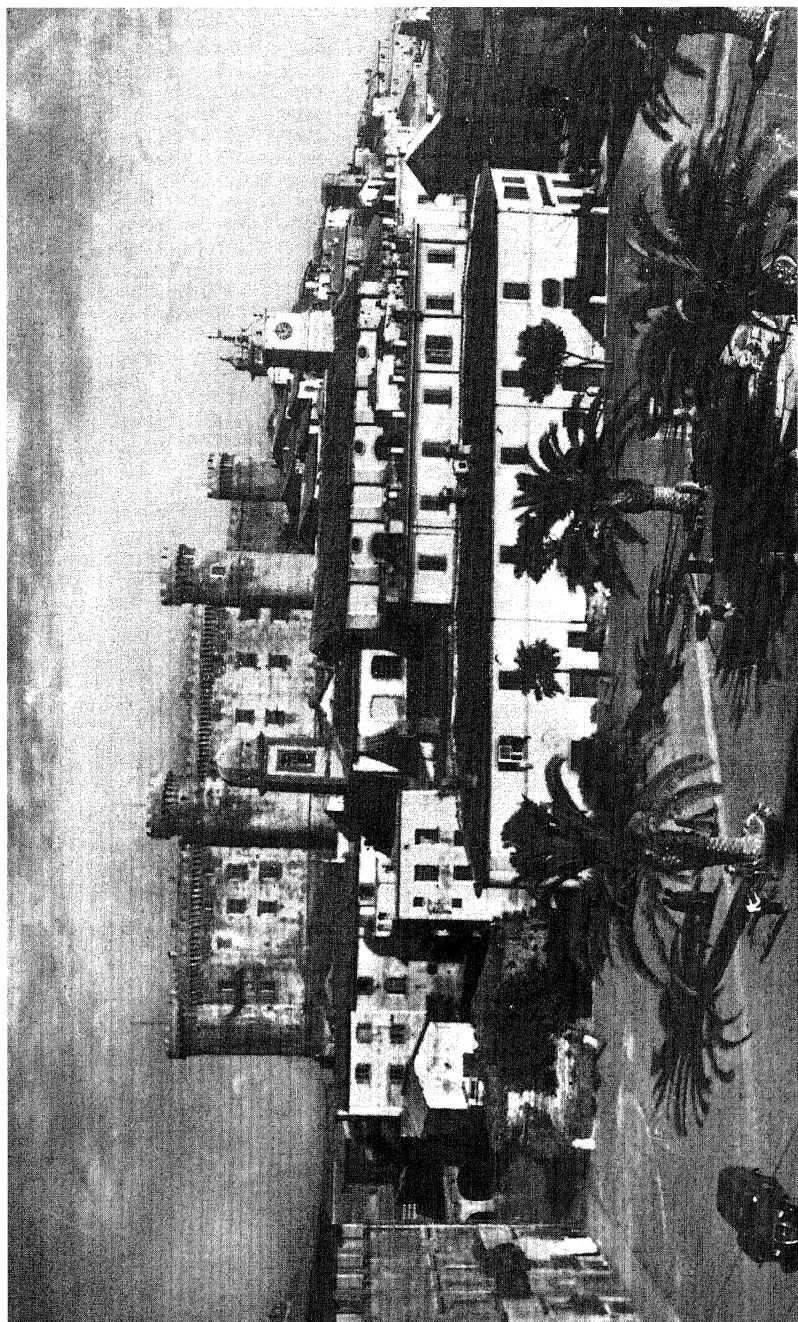
The Roman Maremma is even more desolate than the Tuscan Maremma, partly because the hills tend to be lower, and mainly because fewer efforts were made to reclaim the land in the past.

Since World War Two the Italian Government has inaugurated a campaign to eliminate malaria, and its measures have been so successful that during the course of my last journey I did not see a single mosquito.

In his book, *Christ Stops at Eboli*, Carlo Levi describes how, in some Calabrian towns, he was pursued by hordes of children begging for quinine. I have had the same experience on more than one occasion.

Malaria has certainly been responsible for the decay and the





economic depression of many districts, particularly in the south, where a large part of the population was debilitated.

In the Maremma, conditions had already been greatly improved by the reclamation of the land and by stricter sanitary regulations which have been applied by the government in Rome since 1870.

In spite of this the landscape remains rather mournful, probably because chalky soil is a hindrance to abundant vegetation. Here and there on the hillsides there are fortified cities, among them Tarquinia, formerly known as Corneto, the chief town of the Roman Maremma. It is believed to be near the site of the Etrurian capital of the same name.

From a distance it is a dark mass of battlements, turrets and fortifications that have kept their mediaeval aspect. Within the ramparts there is a maze of narrow streets in which towers, palaces and Romanesque churches are to be found next to each other in great numbers.

To the north, separated from Tarquinia by a valley, there lay an Etruscan city of which there are but few remains. The Necropolis extended to the heights on which is set the present town.

According to certain legends Tarquinia was founded by Tyrrhenus, son of the King of Lydia, who gave his name to the adjoining sea. Later, one of his sons, Tarquinius Priscus, migrated to Rome where his talents raised him to the throne. His descendant, Tarquinius Superbus, expelled by the Romans, applied to the land of his ancestors for help to be reinstated, with the result that long and sanguinary wars ensued in which the Etruscans were finally defeated in 280 B.C.

After the fall of the Empire, occupation by the Barbarians and later by the Saracens was succeeded by a period of four centuries as a free republic. In the fifteenth century, it was annexed by the Papacy. For a very short time in 1799 it was held by the English in the hope of delaying the French advance towards Rome. That, at any rate, is the story told locally, but one that I have not been able to confirm.

The Gothic Palazzo Vitelleschi was damaged in the Second World War, but a substantial part of the structure has survived, including the arcaded Renaissance courtyard. This mansion was taken over by the state to become the Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese, one of the most important Etruscan collections in Italy. Besides the exquisite vases and sarcophagi, there is, in one of the rooms, a series

BY ITALIAN SHORES

of frescoes by a fifteenth-century painter depicting the story of the "Rape of Lucrece", the theme story of Benjamin Britten's opera.

If the cathedral is only of moderate interest, apart from some frescoes, the detail of the town has considerable attraction. A Baroque fountain plays in the Piazza Nazionale and the Chiesa del Suffraggio has an exuberant façade in the same style.

The Palazzo Comunale is Romanesque, with a large external staircase. It has a theatre within its walls.

The Palazzo dei Priori has three of its eight towers still standing and is surrounded by mediaeval houses.

In wandering through this city it is possible to find traces of nearly every form of architecture prevalent in Italy, including the Norman type of portico of the Church of San Pancrazio. Some buildings show obvious signs of Byzantine and even Arabic influence.

A visit to the Etruscan tombs can be made by applying to the custodian of the museum. It is a trip that takes several hours for the Necropolis is nearly two and a half miles long and the graves are numerous. Only a few of them are really well preserved owing to the fact that most of them were opened and plundered at some time or other.

The first person to rediscover them, from the archaeologists point of view, was the Englishman Byres towards the end of the eighteenth century. Then George Dennis made a full survey of them in the course of one of his visits to Italy in the eighteen-forties.

Since then excavations have been continued and all moveable objects have been transferred to different museums. The vaults are of varying depths and some of them are decorated with paintings representing sporting or religious themes and, occasionally, aspects of contemporary life. The colours used in the primitive era were green, red and blue. Later black and white were added to this gamut.

In the hunting scenes, leopards are frequently represented so it can be assumed that they existed in Italy, unless the original Etruscans had brought with them pictures of these animals when they first came from Asia Minor.

In some cases gazelles are also depicted and one is led to suppose that they, too, may have been indigenous in these parts.

All the frescoes are full of movement and are in fact far superior, artistically, to any of the Roman murals that have survived. In seeing them, one is made to realize how great was the influence of the

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Etruscans on their conquerors who adopted many of their customs, their sports and part, at least, of their religious beliefs.

In these tombs there are women playing lyres, men throwing the discus, bacchantes, horse races and many forms of athletic exercises. Some of the figures are clad in togas like those worn by the Romans in the days of the republic.

From Tarquinia there is a road leading inland to Viterbo. It passes through Tuscania, one of the least known and most interesting of the smaller cities of Italy. This city is only about twenty miles from the coastal highway, but probably because it has no railway it has kept its mediaeval character.

For centuries it was known as Toscanella, but it was christened with its Roman name shortly before 1914.

In spite of wars it has changed but little since George Dennis visited it over a hundred years ago when he described it as follows:

"The ancient (Etruscan) town must have been larger than the modern for it comprehended the height of San Pietro which is without the modern walls, and which being rather more elevated than the rest of the town and at the extremity of the tongue of land, was evidently the Arx (citadel) of Tuscania. That it was continued as a fortress during the Middle Ages is proved by the tall square towers of that period which encircle, like a diadem, the brow of the hill.

"The richest jewel on this tiaraed height is the Church of San Pietro, one of the most interesting ecclesiastical structures of central Italy. . . .

"The aisles of the church are divided by two rows of massive columns of Roman antiquity, probably from some temple which stood on this height. Beneath the choir is a crypt, supported by twenty-eight slender columns of no uniformity. . . ."

According to more recent critics, San Pietro was constructed in the eighth century, a period when Tuscania was most flourishing, presumably because of its isolated position far away from the routes taken by invading armies.

The structure of this church is of the greatest interest largely because of its fine proportions, but also because it was built at a time when the tradition of the Roman basilica still lingered, though it was about to disappear.

The façade, which was much admired by Dennis, was restored rather badly some thirty years after his visit to the district.

BY ITALIAN SHORES

The Etruscan tombs in the vicinity of San Pietro are of little interest, because they have been repeatedly plundered through the ages. Near to the church are the ruins of an episcopal palace dating back to the Middle Ages.

Within the city walls are some quaint arcaded streets, two or three mediaeval palaces, a sixteenth-century cathedral and one or two more churches of some interest.

Some twenty miles to the north-west of Tuscania, is the Lake of Bolsena, a familiar sight to the tens of thousands of soldiers of the Allied armies who hurried after the Germans along the road from Rome to Florence.

Like the other lakes in central Italy, it is of volcanic origin. It has the peculiarity of having a slight tide, the water rising and falling as much as a foot at times. It is nearly circular and about eight miles long and thirty miles round.

It lies in a beautiful setting of low hills, some of which are well wooded. In many places the shore is rather marshy, which explains perhaps why few tourists have thought of spending holidays in this district. In the past it was a malarial zone.

In present conditions, however, it would be pleasant for a stay in the spring; a time when the colouring of the water and the vegetation is at its best and a certain amount of modest accommodation is available.

The lake teems with coarse fish of all kinds, including carp and the large eels so much appreciated by the Romans, that Pope Martin IV died from eating too many of them. On the western side there are two beaches which are used on Sundays by the people of Viterbo and Montefiascone, only a few miles away.

Some of the waterside villages are very picturesque, especially Marta with its narrow mediaeval streets and the sanctuary high up on the slopes of a wooded hill.

There is a small harbour and some of the houses have their foundations actually built below the water level. Instead of cellars they have tanks in which fish can be kept for some days after being caught.

A few minutes' walk away is the Church of the Madonna del Monte, the scene of a pilgrimage on May 14th when the peasants and fishermen walk up to it and present the first produce of the spring.

From Marta there is a pleasant and easy excursion by boat to Martana. This islet rises to a height of two hundred and forty feet

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above the level of the lake and is now uninhabited, though in the Middle Ages there was a village there and a castle, the ruins of which are still standing. There are also the remains of the ninth-century Church of San Stefano. It was at Martana that the Gothic Queen Amalasontha was strangled by her cousin Theodatus.

Capodimonte is reached from Marta in about forty-five minutes' walking, mainly by the waterside. This little town is situated on a promontory that juts out fourteen hundred feet into the lake. Here there is a palace built for the Farnese family by the architect Sangallo and there are also the remains of an older castle.

The Island of Bisentina, two miles away, is larger than Martana, and has at one end of it a wooded hill that can be seen from a long way off as it stands out in clear relief against the deep blue waters of the lake. The Farnese family built a church here to commemorate the miraculous escape of St. Christina from drowning. Nearby is a little village with its own tiny harbour and five small chapels built on the path leading up to the top of the hillock called Mount Tabor.

The town Bolsena is next to the former Etruscan Volsinium, rebuilt by the Romans after their conquest of the region.

The Renaissance Church of St. Christina contains a shrine to its patron who, according to the legend, suffered martyrdom after terrible ordeals. Her father, the Roman Governor of the city, had her thrown into the lake with a millstone round her neck, but angels sustained her and she did not sink. She was kept five days in a fiery furnace, but came out unscathed.

When she was taken to the Temple of Apollo to be sacrificed, the idol fell down before her. Imprisoned in a deep dungeon full of poisonous snakes, the reptiles became harmless in her presence. Though her tongue was cut out she continued to sing the praises of the Lord. Her end came at last when she was bound to a post and shot at with arrows until she died.

Next to the catacomb, which is preserved as a sanctuary to this maiden, stands the Chapel of St. Michael with della Robbia reliefs depicting scenes of her martyrdom.

Bolsena is celebrated for another miracle which Raphael has immortalized in a fresco in the Stanza d'Eliodoro at the Vatican.

A Bohemian priest stopped here on his way to Rome and celebrated mass at the church. He had been very disturbed because he could not bring himself to believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation. His

doubts were set at rest when he saw drops of blood fall from the host on to the linen corporal and on to the floor. When Urban IV was told of this occurrence he ordered the relics to be transported to the Cathedral of Orvieto where they are still preserved. It was shortly afterwards that this same Pope instituted the feast of Corpus Domini, and commissioned St. Thomas Aquinas to compose the canticles for the day. The stones stained by the blood of the sacrament are set in the altar, and beneath it is the millstone that was tied to St. Christina when her father ordered her to be drowned.

Bolsena is situated by the lakeside next to the main road from Siena to Rome. It is dominated by a castle with four large and well-preserved flanking towers. The Palazzo Cozza, just below it, was the seat of the Papal Legate and has some rooms decorated with frescoes by Zuccari.

Going southward, the highway runs for three or four miles along the shore and then rises up a steep hill from which there is a really magnificent view of the lake, with its deep soft blue contrasting with the vivid green of the vegetation on land and on the two islands in the distance.

Montefiascone, perched up high on a rock, rises loftily over the road. For hundreds of years it has been noted for its wines, the bottles of which bear on their labels the words "Est, Est, Est".

The story is that one of the famous Fugger family, a Bishop of Augsburg, was so fond of good wine that when he was on a journey he always made his valet go ahead to taste the local vintages and, if they were sound, the valet was to send back a message with the word, "Est".

On arriving at Montefiascone, the trusted servant was so pleased with what he drank that he wrote "Est, Est, Est" on the card to his master. The master came soon afterwards and drank so much that he died. Before expiring he bequeathed money to the city on condition that a barrel of the wine he had liked so much should be poured every year over his tomb, on which his valet inscribed the following epitaph:

*Est, Est, Est,
Propter nimium est,
Joannes de Foucris
Dominus meus
Mortuus est.*

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The Church of S. Flaviano, dating in its actual form from the thirteenth century, contains the tomb of the thirsty bishop who is represented with a goblet on either side of his head.

The cathedral, with its large dome, is noteworthy mainly because of a bas relief of the Madonna and Child by one of the della Robbias.

Beyond the nave is, as it were, a second church, the building in this case having been constructed in 1032.

Outside one of the city gates on the north side is a small square from which one has one of the finest views in central Italy. According to George Dennis, Montefiascone was probably the site of the Fanum Voltumnae, the shrine at which "the princes of Etruria" were wont to meet in council on the general affairs of the Confederation. Then later on he adds:

"Well may this height have been chosen as the site of the national temple. It commands a magnificent and truly Etruscan panorama. The lake shines beneath in all its breadth and beauty—truly meriting the title of 'the great lake of Italy'—and though the towers and palaces of Volsinii have long ceased to sparkle on its bosom, it still mirrors the white cliffs of its twin islets, and the distant snow peaks of Amiata and Cetona. In every other direction is one 'intermingled pomp of vale and hill'. In the east rise the dark mountains of Umbria: and the long line of mist at their foot marks the course of 'the Etruscan stream'—

the noble river

That rolls by the towers of Rome.

"The giant Apennines of Sabina loom afar off, dim through the hazy noon; and the darker Ciminia, dark with its once dread forests, stretches its triple-crested mass across the southern horizon."

The road to Rome from Montefiascone next skirts the walls of Viterbo, a town of some twenty thousand inhabitants, completely surrounded by a ring of Lombard ramparts and towers. Though heavily bombarded in the Second World War, the mediaeval streets in the centre and the Papal Palace escaped lightly.

The site of an Etruscan settlement and then a Roman colony, Viterbo was used as a base by the Lombard kings when they were planning to capture Rome in the eighth century.

For a short while it was a free city disputed by the Empire and the

Papacy, and in the latter half of the thirteenth century several Popes in succession made it their place of residence.

It was in the Piazza San Lorenzo that Pope Adrian IV (the Englishman, Nicholas Breakspear) compelled the Emperor, Frederick I, to hold his stirrup in token of humble submission. The Romanesque cathedral nearby was much restored in the sixteenth century and was the scene of the brutal murder of Henry of Cornwall, nephew of Henry III, by Guy de Montfort, son of the famous Simon who was killed at the battle of Evesham.

Although most of the churches suffered some damage during the past hostilities, the fifteenth-century Palazzo Farnese escaped intact with its fine courtyard, ballustraded windows and Gothic decorations.

Several popes were buried in the Church of San Francesco but only the tombs of Clement IV and of Adrian V escaped destruction. The latter is one of the masterpieces of Arnolfo di Cambio, and the former is also by the same hand or designed by one of his pupils.

In one of the chapels is the grave of Letitia Wyse-Bonaparte of the American branch of the family.

Santa Maria della Verita, formerly a church, was transformed into a museum of pictures and Etruscan objects. Fortunately a greater part of the frescoes were salvaged and consolidated. Among them were sixteenth-century copies of murals by Benozzo Gozzoli that had decorated the Church of Santa Rosa prior to its restoration.

The most noteworthy monument in the city is the battlemented Palazzo Papale which was constructed for the popes in the thirteenth century. This Gothic building, with its large loggia supported by a single ogive, has been carefully restored.

In the interior is the large audience hall where three popes were elected.

In spite of much war damage Viterbo remains a city of the greatest interest, too often ignored by the casual traveller. In contrast to places like Tuscania and Tarquinia, which have preserved a mediaeval atmosphere, it belongs really to the early Renaissance, with its square and fountains and large Gothic palaces. Had it remained an independent state it might have had its own schools of painting and architecture, its academies and men of letters. As it happened, it was too near to Rome to preserve a culture of its own. The court of the Vatican was a magnet too strong for artists to ignore. So after a

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brief spell of glory Viterbo became a provincial city whilst keeping some of the trappings of its period of ascendancy, its fortified palaces in narrow streets, its fountains, its many churches and its great ramparts.

XIV

THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA

Bracciano. Civita Vecchia. The Approach to Rome. Cerveteri. The Alban towns: Frascati, Albano, Rocca di Papa. Nemi. Tivoli.

I HAVE OFTEN been tempted to envy travellers in the Middle Ages who went to foreign countries with but a scant idea of what they were going to see. Aldous Huxley observes in one of his books that before the days of photographs and cheap reproductions, every mile through new territory was fraught with surprise and excitement at what was to come.

Occasionally, even in the present, there are opportunities of striking something totally unexpected because the ebb and flow of tourist traffic changes constantly, and frequently neglects routes that were well trodden in the past.

It was in this way that my first visit to Bracciano many years ago gave me an unusual thrill of pleasure because I had not realized how beautiful it was nor what it was like. I had gone there just simply because I had seen the name on the map and I had hoped that the lake would complete a good landscape.

It was only later that I learned that in the early nineteenth century some of the romantic writers came half-way across Europe to see the castle which they considered to be the ideal of what such a building should be.

When I returned recently to Bracciano, I found that all my early impressions were confirmed. The setting, the landscape and above all the soft colouring of the sky, the water and the vegetation pleased me just as much as ever.

The astonishing thing about this place is that though it is only twenty-six miles from Rome, it has not been developed either for tourists or as a dormitory town.

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The lake, six miles across and twenty miles in circumference, appears to be on the site of an extinct volcano, for it is surrounded by a fairly even ring of green hills. According to legend, the Etruscan city of Sabate was swallowed up by its waves and on a calm day, its temples, palaces and streets can still be seen through the clear water.

The town of Bracciano has some four to five thousand inhabitants and is the market centre of the district. Although it has no minor buildings of great merit, it is pleasantly situated on a hill, and its houses are grouped round the huge castle that belongs to Prince Odescalchi.

This late mediaeval fortress was built by the Orsini in 1479, and was unsuccessfully besieged by the troops of the Borgia Pope Alexander VI. It passed later into the hands of the Odescalchi, who were forced to sell it in 1803, but they did so on condition that they should be allowed to buy it back if they could raise sufficient money within a given time. At the eleventh hour a lucky inheritance allowed them to do so, and they have owned it ever since.

Permission to visit the castle must be obtained from the prince's agent at 13 Piazza Ss Apostoli in Rome, as it is still used as a private residence.

The interior is decorated with frescoes and full of period furniture, but the real attraction is the view of the lake and of the surrounding countryside from the top of the battlements.

The village inn, in the main street, is unpretentious but was formerly a palace, used probably as a kind of dower house to the castle. It has some fine stone fireplaces, and on the *piano nobile*, a large room was transformed into a *bierstube* by German troops during their occupation of Italy. They decorated it in typical national style, with murals of hunting scenes which fit in quite well with the architecture.

The lake is evidently full of fish for I saw women selling large pike in the streets. I was told that some years ago a lucky angler managed to hook a twenty-eight-pound trout, but that, as a rule, five or six pounds is the maximum.

The fishing is carefully preserved, but licences by the day, week or month can be obtained at the town hall. A road winds through orchards down to the lake shore where there are two or three bathing establishments, a small beach, an inn and a couple of rustic restaurants.

BY ITALIAN SHORES

Except on Sundays and in the height of the holiday season this little resort is never crowded, probably because the lake water is not nearly as refreshing as the sea.

The climate here is exceptionally mild, and most years it should be possible to bathe from the beginning of May to the end of October.

Apart from sailing and fishing there is plenty to do for those who like a quiet holiday. The shores of the lake are sparsely inhabited so that there are pleasant walks in two directions as well as on the wooded hills that surround it. Trevignano, eight miles away, on the far side of the water, is near the site of the vanished city of Sabate. As if to confirm the legend it stands on a cliff that goes steeply down showing that there has been a subsidence of the land there. Above it on a rocky eminence, are the ruins of a castle built by the Orsini and destroyed by Caesar Borgia.

In one of the churches there is a remarkable twelfth-century tryptich. There are besides several churches of a later date.

Two-thirds of the way round the lake Anguillara Sabazia, literally eely Sabazia, originally a little fishing port, still has remains of fortifications and the ruins of a castle that are fairly well preserved. The village has fragments of its ancient ramparts and is set on a promontory that juts out into the lake. In olden times it was noted for its fishing, and on the arms of the Count of Anguillara figure two eels.

For some distance, beyond Anguillara, on the west bank of the lake, the road runs near to the shore through attractive wooded scenery with fine views across the water until the hydroplane station of Vigna di Vialle is reached and three miles farther on Bracciano itself.

The line to Rome passes through the odd and rather desolate country of the northern Campagna which is beginning to lose its melancholy charm with the rapid spread of the capital. Its beauty lay in wide horizons and in the grey-green of its undulations broken, here by the arches of an aqueduct, there by the mound of a tomb or the lone column of a former villa, and occasionally, on a hill, by the ruins of a mediaeval tower or fortress. These odd remains lose their picturesqueness against a background of villas, factories or garden cities.

Even the light and colour are divested of their tenuous quality, and the prospect of domes and church towers in the distance is slightly blurred by the smoke.

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The Via Claudia from Bracciano skirts the hill of Galleria, formerly crowned by an Etruscan fortress and later by a mediaeval city of which some ruins subsist. According to Augustus Hare, seventy-five years ago the plain was so malarial that people who lived on these heights never dared to venture down to the level ground except in fear and trembling and then only in the daytime. Now the district is probably as healthy as anywhere else in Italy and it may one day become the site of one of the satellite towns of the capital for it is not more than seventeen miles from the outskirts of the city.

The approach to Rome from Tarquinia by the coast is only of secondary interest from the scenic point of view. The landscape is rather mournful and as the road goes southwards the hills diminish in height and the sparse vegetation becomes even more scanty.

Civita Vecchia, known principally because it was the chief port of the Papal States on the west coast, is a town of modern aspect with no particular charm or character. During the Second World War it was pretty heavily bombarded from the air, and its harbour put out of action.

It was founded by Trajan when the mouth of the Tiber became silted up and ships could no longer come up the river. In the sixth century it was for a while occupied by the forces of the Byzantine Emperors. Later the Saracens seized it and made it a base for their operations to attempt to capture Rome.

After three or four centuries of varying fortunes, Civita Vecchia was definitely annexed by the popes who built up a fleet there to combat the Barbary Corsairs.

Its chief commercial value now, apart from some local industries, is that it is the port of departure from the mainland to Sardinia, and the base of the coastal schooners that bring supplies for the capital.

The Museo Civico, housed in a former monastery, contains some Etruscan vases and other antiquities, besides some prints that belong to the period when the city was part of the Papal States.

There are no monuments of note except the town hall which was formerly a mediaeval castle and is on the north side of the port. On the south side the immense Forte Michelangelo was constructed by Bramante and Michelangelo by the orders of Pope Julius II.

Like Ancona on the opposite side of Italy, Civita Vecchia was for centuries used by the tens of thousands of pilgrims who flocked to

Rome every year to obtain the Papal blessing. When the railways were built its importance diminished.

For a while the train hugs the coast so closely that travellers can see the grey sand of the beach, and from time to time ruins standing near the sea, like those depicted by Poussin and Lorrain in their classical paintings.

At Santa Marinella, now a small seaside resort, a mediaeval castle stands on the water's edge. At Santa Severa, there is another one on a similar site, but constructed on the foundations of an Etruscan fortress.

Palo is another of these places that looks like a seventeenth-century mural in a Baroque villa, for it has a waterside castle and ruins. All that is required to complete the picture are some sailing ships with high quarter-decks and bellying sails. In summertime buses and a small local train carry passengers to the sands of Ladispoli, noted for really good bathing.

Five miles inland on the Bracciano road, Ceveteri is a small mediaeval village on the site of the Etruscan city of Caere, and its adjoining necropolis. As usual, it is on a height.

The present town has some fortifications and the sixteenth-century palace of the Ruspoli family. The tombs of the cemetery are of outstanding interest. The Grotta dei Tarquini, the family vault of the last of the Roman kings, has inscriptions in red and black in which their names are cited.

In other cells there are mural paintings which have been partially effaced by time. The best of the objects in this necropolis have been transferred to the Etruscan Museum in Rome or the Etruscan Museum of the Vatican.

The most interesting frescoes are in the *Tombe dei Leoni Dipinti* (Tombs of the Painted Lions) and in the *Tumulo dei Animali Dipinti* which contain vivid representations of animals.

Many of the *grotti* display distinct architectural form and have well-turned columns and arches and even in one case reliefs of animals.

The rest of the way to Rome has become rather tame owing to the changing character of the Campagna. This region already gives the impression that it is about to be swallowed up by the growing suburbs of the capital.

Until forty or fifty years ago vast estates were farmed like ranches

in the Far West. Buffaloes roamed about the rolling plains and in some cases families owned as many as fifteen hundred horses that were as wild as broncos and were rounded up in much the same way. Once a year, the best of them were sent to participate in the races down the Corso in the centre of Rome, when riderless animals were driven headlong down this narrowest of streets.

Estates of this kind have practically disappeared since the reclamation of the marshes. More recently, large domains have been broken up to provide holdings for peasants and reduce unemployment and to save agriculture by intensive cultivation.

Since it is not within the scope of this book to describe Rome or its immediate suburbs. I shall content myself by writing about some of the places next to it in a rather summary manner.

According to Gregorovius, in the height of its glory the Eternal City must have had a population of well over three million and extended very nearly as far as the present mouth of the Tiber to the former port of Ostia, now in ruins. In the sixteenth century, it had rather less than 55,000 inhabitants. By 1900, this figure had risen to about 400,000 souls. Over recent years the growth has been such that Rome may become once more one of the largest capitals in the world though at the present moment it does not contain more than two million people.

Ostia Scavi is one of the places where Æneas is supposed to have disembarked after his long journey from Troy. It was for centuries a prosperous town, even after the course of the Tiber had been deflected from it. Previously it had served as a base for the fleets of the Roman Empire and a large part of the supplies for the capital had been landed in its harbour.

After the Barbarian invasions it fell into decay, suffered from raids by the Saracens and then finally was a prey to the worst enemy of all, the malaria germ.

The remains are of interest because they can give one an idea of what a Roman city was like in the third and fourth centuries, that is to say two hundred years after the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii. The excavations reveal nearly every salient feature of the old town, including the temples, the Forum, the granaries and store-houses and the theatre in which well-staged plays are presented every summer.

Like Rome, Ostia had its skyscrapers, blocks of flats of anything

up to thirteen or fourteen storeys, of which of course little remains. There are also two or three houses in a fair state of preservation which still have mural paintings and mosaic floors of some artistic value.

Ostia Scavi is only thirteen miles from the centre of the capital, and on the electric railway that goes to Ostia Marina, a moderately attractive modern resort frequented by the Roman populace. Architecturally, it is frankly rather a nightmare. The coast is flat and the sand a dark grey, but the bathing is reasonably good, so it is not a bad place to go to when it is unbearably hot in Rome.

Twenty-five years ago I lived on the Hill of the Quirinal in a house with a high observation tower from which there was a superb view of the Campagna. To the west, I could see the Domes of the Pantheon and of St. Peter's and other monuments of the City. To the east lay the low line of the Alban hills, and behind them the deep blue of the Sabine Mountains, frequently capped with snow in winter.

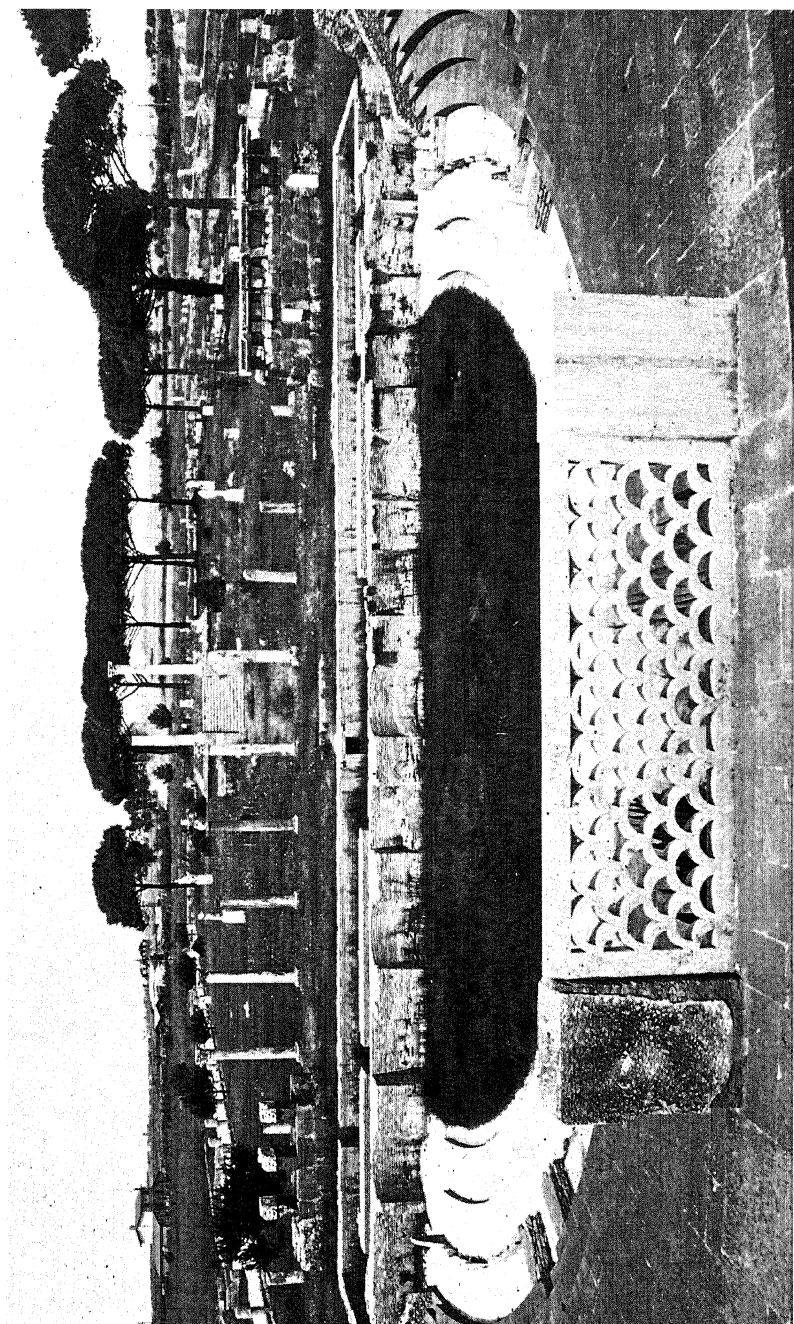
One of my favourite excursions was to Frascati, nine miles away on the first slopes of the Alban hills. It is about a thousand feet above the sea, and so well above the level of Rome which it dominates. Whether you go by train or car, the way to it leads past the mournful fragments of aqueduct in the dusty grey-green Campagna, with the tombs and monuments of the Appian Way in the distance.

Then suddenly the ground rises, and in a few minutes one can see many of the buildings of Rome through the tenuous violet haze.

The prospect here is at all times beautiful but never more so than at sunset in the autumn when the sky above the city is tinted with bright colours of varying hue like the background of a Turner landscape.

The town was the headquarters of the German armies during the Second World War and was, in consequence, severely bombarded. The early eighteenth-century Duomo was badly damaged and the high altar practically destroyed. On one side of this monument was a memorial tablet to the Young Pretender who died at Frascati in 1788. He is buried at St. Peter's.

The city is on a sloping ground, and has many pleasant restaurants with terraces overlooking the plain. The white wine which is grown locally is one of the best in Italy, but has this peculiarity that it is only drinkable within a few miles of where it was produced. Even in Rome it begins to lose its savour.





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This vintage goes admirably with the regional dishes, the best of which are the *capretto* (kid) and mountain lamb.

For centuries Frascati was used as a summer resort by the Roman nobility, many of whom built large residences in its immediate vicinity.

Among these were the Villa Aldobrandini, a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture with a fine park in which there are terraces, grottoes and fountains; the Villa Falconieri with a splendid gate and a beautiful cypress pool, and the Villa Torlonia, Kesselring's residence during the war, perhaps the most splendidly situated of them all. It is noted because of the cascades in its gardens.

These houses are outstanding in size and splendour and altogether remarkable for their wrought-iron decorations and statuary. Several of them are open to the public and the Torlonia gardens are used more or less as the chief park of the town.

Behind Frascati on a hill are the ruins of Tusculum, founded, according to legend, by Telegonus, the son of Ulysses and Circe. It was a flourishing city in Roman times and for a while it was a fortress in the early Middle Ages until it was dismantled by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick the First.

The scattered remains are of a certain interest, but the superb view of Rome alone is worth seeing, especially from the Castle which is situated on a rock over two thousand feet above the sea level.

A little way beyond Frascati is the site of the Amphitheatre, and farther on, the ruins of a villa which is said to have belonged to Cicero. Then comes the well-preserved theatre which faces westwards towards Rome and the sea. Behind it on a steep hill rises the Arx of Tusculum, the former citadel. From here there is an agreeable walk to the other resorts of the Alban hills which are generally known as the *Castelli Romani*.

First of all at Grotta Ferrata there is a huge fortified monastery occupied by Orthodox monks who perform their services in Greek and according to the Greek ritual. It was founded in the eleventh century and turned into a fortress by Pope Julius II who was abbot here before being preferred to the Holy See. Over the portals of the ruins of the old abbey church there are some Byzantine mosaics dating back to the original foundation. In the chapel, there is a series of frescoes by Domenichino depicting incidents in the life of St. Nilus who was driven away from Eastern Italy by the Saracens.

BY ITALIAN SHORES

The monastery was founded in his memory by his friend and companion Bartolomeo. He placed in the cave once inhabited by the saint, a picture of the Virgin that he had treasured. Outside this grotto, there were iron railings—hence the name of Grotta Ferrata.

Marino, three miles farther on, is a mediaeval town a thousand feet above the sea-level. Like all the other *Castelli Romani* it was much battered during the Second World War, but has been largely restored to its former condition. Nearby is the rather melancholy-looking lake of Albano set in an extinct volcano. The surrounding region is well wooded and singularly beautiful, particularly in the autumn and in the spring.

Alba Longa to the east, was, according to legend, the place from which came the first inhabitants of Rome. Above, Castel Gandolfo on the west bank of the lake is the summer residence of the Popes which was built for Urban VIII in the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Albano, farther to the south and on the same shore, is mainly attractive because of its superb setting on the heights and because of the sylvan scenery in its neighbourhood. In this district there are still a number of fine old villas, including the Palazzo Chigi which was built by Bernini and stands in a large park.

Genzano is a largish country town, near to the lake of Nemi which was drained by the orders of Mussolini in order to salvage two Roman barges which had been sunk there some two thousand years previously. Unfortunately, at some time or other they had been emptied of their contents.

Like the Lake of Albano, the Lake of Nemi is of volcanic origin and surrounded by steeply wooded slopes. At the eastern extremity the village of Nemi has pleasant rustic restaurants, with gardens and terraces. Near to it is a mediaeval castle which was originally constructed by the Colonna family.

From this place, it is possible to walk by wooded paths to Monte Cavo about five miles away. This mountain, which is over three thousand feet high, had formerly on its crest the ruins of a temple to Jupiter which were replaced by a monastery in the eighteenth century. There is now an hotel on the summit which has the advantage of being cool even in the hottest of summers. The view from the summit is one of the finest in the district. It comprises not only the whole of the Campagna, but also Monte Circeo, the mountains above Terra-

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cina to the south, and the Volscians, as well as the Sabine hills behind.

The Via Triumphalis, an avenue once used by victorious Roman generals, goes to Frascati by way of Rocca di Papa. This place is over two thousand feet up and one of the highest of the *Castelli Romani*, and it stands on a volcanic cone, which is crowned by the ruins of a castle.

Of all the sights recommended to tourists, the Villa d'Este at Tivoli is certainly one that deservedly merits its renown, particularly if it is seen in the springtime when the flowers are at their best.

The eighteen miles of road that lead up to it from Rome are gradually becoming urbanized and the scenery has lost much of that melancholy quality, which the landscape painters loved so much: the bare Campagna, dotted here and there with tumuli or fragmentary ruins, and goatherds standing against the skyline. There still remain the lovely peasant carts, with their curious painted spherical awnings to give the local colour, and in the background the blue-tinted Sabine Range.

At the fifteenth milestone, it is possible to leave the main road to see Hadrian's Villa, with its acres of ruins, its Egyptian Halls, its baths, its temples and its theatre. Of its kind, one of the most complete relics of Roman times, I feel that such a place is of more interest to the archaeologist than to the layman. Its real treasures, those of aesthetic value have long ago been transferred to museums, and to me these remains have only the attraction of a moderate picturesqueness.

Tivoli, situated magnificently on a steep hillside is a totally different matter. It is a mediaeval city with many Renaissance monuments, but it has nevertheless a Roman temple, the Temple of the Sybil, which is in a fair state of preservation. In the Church of S. Biago, there are some fine frescoes of the Giotto period. S. Maria Maggiore contains a tenth-century "Miraculous Virgin", but the cascades are the real attraction of this town through which the mountain torrents flow.

In the grounds of the Villa Gregoriana, there are waterfalls and grottoes in a wonderful setting of vegetation and rocks.

The gardens of the Villa d'Este, built in 1594, are one of the greatest masterpieces of landscape architecture. They lie on a steep slope, which is terraced, and intersected with little shaded paths and stone stairways. Between the cypresses and flowering bushes there

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are cascades and flowing rills, and the whole place is pervaded with the gentle sound of rippling and falling water. Some hundreds of feet below stretches the huge plain of the Campagna, and beyond it the prospect of the domes and pinnacles of Rome, the flats of the Pontine Marshes, and in the misty distance, the Mediterranean.

Behind, unseen, in the Sabine Mountain, lies the village where Horace wrote his odes and found a sylvan retreat in the blazing summers of two thousand years ago.

XV

THE PONTINE MARSHES AND THE APPROACH TO NAPLES

*Rome to Naples. Anzio. The Pontine Marshes. The lost city of Ninfa.
Terracina. Monte Circeo. Formia. Gaeta. Caserta.
The History of Naples.*

THE TWIN cities of Anzio and Nettuno are just under forty miles from Rome, so with improved communications, they are tending to become popular summer resorts for trippers and commuters. Even during the heat of July and August, there is nearly always a fresh breeze. The sand and the water are cleaner than at Ostia and there are some large villas with parks to relieve the monotony of the rather tasteless modern architecture.

In spite of the landing of the Allies in this region in 1944, neither of the towns suffered much damage, and they are in fact much as they were before the war.

Anzio, however, is of very ancient origin. According to a Greek writer it was founded by Anthias, the son of Circe and Ulysses. Both Caligula and Nero were born here, and the latter built a port, the ruins of which can be seen beneath the sea on a calm day.

It was in the ruins of Nero's villa that were found the Apollo Belvidere and the Borghese gladiator of the Louvre but the remains of the original building have practically disappeared. On a promontory at Nettuno there remains a small and compact mediaeval town with a few strips of crumbling ramparts, as well as a rather picturesque castle.

The inhabitants of this place are said to have a considerable amount of Saracen blood in their veins, and until quite recently, they wore Eastern-looking native costumes on feast days and holidays.

The view of the old town from Porto d'Anzio is attractive, especi-

BY ITALIAN SHORES

ally on a fine day when it is possible to see Monte Circeo and the mountains behind Terracina.

The Pontine Marshes stretch for thirty miles southward from Nettuno, and ten to twelve miles from the sea to the Volscian Hills. Before the rise of the Empire, this land was dry and fertile, but was allowed to decay through neglect. Caesar, Augustus and Trajan attempted unsuccessfully to drain it. At the beginning of this century it was a malarial swamp, where cowboys rounded up buffaloes and almost wild horses just as in the Far West.

The reclamation of this area was started in 1899, and completed towards 1930, in time for Mussolini to take all the credit for the operation to himself, though he was actually responsible for the building of the two well-planned cities, Littoria and Sabaudia.

Ninfa, on the fringe of the Pontine Marshes, has had a strange fate. It was once a prosperous mediaeval town, but it had to be abandoned because of malaria and because some of its streets were literally swamped. They were brought to light by drainage only to be submerged once more when the district was flooded by the Germans during the war. Subsequently they reappeared and presumably for the last time.

There are ruins here of a monastery, a palace and a church.

Norma Ninfa, the station for this place is on the Rome Terracina line which runs on the verge of the marshes and the Volscian Hills.

Sermoneta, on the heights two and a half miles away, preserves a good proportion of its ramparts and fortifications, some interesting churches and some mediaeval houses. The Castle of the Gaetani is one of the largest and most complete in Italy. The Gaetani received their vast estates in southern Italy from the Byzantine emperors in the eleventh century.

Their fortress was for a while occupied by the Borgia's, including the infamous Lucretia.

Terracina at the far end of the marshes is in a picturesque and beautiful situation between the hills and the sea. From the summit of the rocky crag behind it, there is a view of Monte Circeo to the north, of the Ponza Islands out at sea and, on a very clear day, of the cone of Vesuvius, with its plume of smoke.

On this eminence stand the ruins of a palace built by Theodoric. The tradition is that Terracina was founded by Jupiter himself, and

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the Cathedral incorporates many fragments of a temple built in his honour on the same site.

The town has remains of fairly extensive fortifications for it lies on the former line of demarcation between the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples, which was reached after passing through an arched gateway known as the Portella.

The frontier was clearly a natural one, for the narrow strip of land between hill and sea was easy to defend but already waving palms and the deeper blue of the water give one the feeling that one has reached southern Italy. The populace seems more excitable than the calm and courteous types encountered a few miles back.

No one should pass Terracina without going, if possible, to Monte Circeo, which is on a promontory about ten miles to the North.

It is conceivable that this hill, which stands out like an island in the flatness of the Pontine Marshes, was at one time cut off from the mainland.

It was here that the witch Circe held Ulysses in thrall, and the cup from which his companions drank and were turned into beasts was kept as a relic and shown even as late as in the reign of the Emperor Claudius. On the mountain, there was a tomb of Elpenor, friend of the great wanderer, and the remains of a temple which once housed a huge statue of the goddess herself.

At the foot of the hill a few small hotels and private houses line the beach and rocky inlets of what I consider to be one of the most beautiful places for a quiet holiday in the whole of Italy. The water is clear and clean, the light and colouring brilliant, and at present, except on Sundays, this little place is rarely crowded. The local wine is excellent and the fish is of the best. The road stops abruptly before the point where a harbour existed during the Empire.

A little way up the hill can be seen S. Felice Circeo, a village built round a thirteenth-century castle that belonged first to the Frangipani and later to the Caetani.

Monte Circeo itself is over a thousand feet high, and falls steeply down to the sea on the westward side. By a strange freak of nature the temperature varies considerably on its different slopes, with the result that flowers, trees and bushes of every kind are to be found there. On the north side they are almost Alpine and on the south side almost tropical. Over six thousand acres of this area, including the

promontory itself, have been turned into a national park, and can therefore never be developed by the speculative builder.

The view from the summit of the hill is one of the most extensive in this part of Italy, comprising the Ponza Islands, the Peninsula of Gaeta, and even, on some days, Vesuvius, Capri and Ischia to the south, and Rome to the north. Nearer by stretch the Pontine Marshes with the mournful lake of Sabaudia coming right up to where the ground begins to rise.

In spite of its proximity to Rome, Monte Circeo remained, until recently, more or less isolated from the outside world because it was entirely surrounded by one of the most malarial districts in Italy. Also it was difficult of access.

Beyond Terracina, the Rome-Naples road swerves inland, and clings closely to the bottom of the hills and away from the seaboard marshes.

Fondi itself, an agricultural centre of about fourteen thousand inhabitants, was badly damaged by aerial bombardments. The thirteenth-century castle was half-destroyed and the Palace of the Princes, also mediaeval, suffered to a lesser degree. There are as well remains of Cyclopean, Roman and Neapolitan ramparts.

This town was repeatedly attacked by the Saracens and later by the Turks. The famous Corsair Barbarossa even attempted to kidnap from here the beautiful Countess Julia Gonzaga, for his master the Sultan. She fled inland and escaped capture, and the pirate, furious, sacked Fondi and slaughtered many of its inhabitants.

The castle is noted in ecclesiastical history because it was within its walls that the French Cardinals elected the anti-Pope Clement VII and started the Great Schism.

About seven and a half miles away by road, is the village of Sperlonga situated at the foot of the rocky spur of the fifteen-hundred-foot-high Monte S. Magno. On the way there are two lakes, the first of which—Lake S. Puoto—has a submerged city beneath its waters. A long sandy beach stretches northwards and there are some interesting grottoes in the cliffs.

Since no roads follow the mountainous coast that runs southwards to Gaeta, there is plenty of wild and rather primitive country to be explored on foot or better still by boat. The local wines are good but the accommodation is rather limited.

Returning to the Via Appia, the main artery to Naples, the traveller

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passes Itri, a picturesque town, dominated by the ruins of a castle. In the early nineteenth century, the famous partisan leader "Fra Diavolo" organized resistance against the French and received encouragement and support from the English. For years he evaded capture, but was eventually arrested and executed in 1806. His adventures served as a theme for Auber's opera of the same name.

By-passing the Gaeta Peninsula, the Via Appia reaches the coast once more at Formia, on a really beautiful bay where the slopes are covered with groves of lemons, pomegranates and oranges.

This town not only has great antiquity, but it was the residence of many noted people including Vitruvius, one of the greatest architects of all time. On the site of the Villa Caposele, formerly a summer residence of the Kings of Naples, is reputed to have been a house belonging to Cicero, and there are certainly some ruins in the garden. Cicero was probably murdered by his enemies here.

Formia is a pleasant and inexpensive bathing resort, with good beaches and a certain number of comfortable hotels. The view of the bay is a splendid one with the Gaeta Peninsula to the north; the promontories of Naples to the south. The climate in winter is a good one, but not quite so mild as at Amalfi or Positano on the Sorrento Peninsula, for the sheltering mountains are farther away.

For centuries Gaeta was considered to be the key to the northern approaches of the Kingdom of Naples. It was occupied in turn by the Byzantines and the Saracens, and then finally annexed by the Norman rulers of the south. The kings of Aragon strengthened its fortifications, but it was nevertheless captured by Charles VIII of France in his triumphant advance in the fifteenth century.

During the Napoleonic Wars it was besieged by Massena and the garrison, assisted by the British Fleet commanded by Sir Sidney Smith, held out for over six months. Victor Hugo lived there for a few months as a child when his father was appointed military governor of the fortress.

In 1860-1, the last of the Bourbon kings was besieged in Gaeta by Garibaldi. Finally in the Second World War, the city was heavily and frequently bombarded by the Allies.

The castle, built mainly by the Aragonese, but partly by the Angevins, has a small room where Mazzini was imprisoned for a few days to prevent him from interfering with the assault on Rome in 1870.

From the hills behind the city there is an extensive prospect com-

prising, on a clear day, Vesuvius and Mount Epomeo on the Island of Ischia.

From the harbour there is a service of steamers that goes twice a week to the Ponza Islands. The penal settlements still exist where so many political prisoners were incarcerated by the Bourbons and later by the Fascists.

On the north side of the Gaeta Peninsula there are a number of beaches and sandy bays, frequented mainly by Neapolitans.

The train goes in a direct line southward to Naples and crosses first of all the Garigliano flats where there was fighting during the advance of the Allies on Rome. It was in this marshy district that Marius hid from Sulla's mercenaries, and here that the French were totally defeated by the Spaniards in 1503.

A few miles farther back in the region of Mount Minturno the women still wear the peasant dress, consisting of a black overskirt gathered up at the back to reveal a scarlet petticoat, a white blouse with puffed sleeves and a delicate lace coif flattened out at the top. The black overskirt is let down to hide the scarlet petticoat when a woman becomes a widow.

The shepherds who come down from the mountains, make their sandals out of old motor tyres and lace them up over their trousers like the Gauls who are depicted on Roman bas-relief. In winter they drape sheepskins or goatskins over their shoulders. Beyond the Garigliano the line passes under Monte Massico, a clump of hills that rise nearly three thousand feet up above the level of the nearby sea.

The Volturno Plain is dreary enough in aspect, but notable because its vineyards used to produce the Falernian wine that Horace praised so often in his poems.

The road to Naples passes through Capua and Caserta, though it is possible to by-pass this second city.

There are two Capuas. The first, a formal-looking town of eighteenth-century aspect, dates back to the ninth century. A desolate-looking place of no particular character, it must have been gay enough when it was a garrison town under the Bourbon kings. The museum of antiquities, mainly statuary and a Norman cathedral have been modernized in a rather tasteless manner.

The second Capua, Santa Maria Capua Vetere, stands on the site of the city where Hannibal wintered his troops to the great detriment of their discipline and courage. According to historians, it was

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large and wealthy, and its inhabitants were so addicted to luxury that they corrupted the Carthaginian soldiers. It has a large amphitheatre and the remains of a temple of Mithras with murals of animals and people.

Having spent a very cold Christmas in an extemporized hospital in Caserta, I have kept the aversion for it that I had developed when I had to visit the Allied Force headquarters with its thousands of staff officers working in the Royal Palace.

This immense residence of the Bourbon Kings, is I suppose, as large as any other building of its kind except the Escorial. It was constructed in the middle of the eighteenth century by the architect Vanvitelli. It has little of the lightness and grace of other Baroque places such as Schönbrunn or the Palace of the Bishops at Würzburg, at any rate externally, for the ceremonial marble staircase leading to the State apartments and the theatre have all the richness of decoration which is lacking in the exterior.

According to a rumour which I have never been able to confirm, there was, somewhere within its walls, a lavatory with a seat of solid gold, so solid and so heavy that no one had been able to lift it.

If the Palace buildings are heavy and lifeless, the same cannot be said of the gardens which are a masterpiece of formal yet imaginative designing.

Stretching north-eastwards from the Palace, there is a vista of marble basins and fountains supported by nymphs and goddesses, sea-gods and tritons, culminating in a cascade on the hillside, topped by a terrace with a line of gleaming white statues. Though this glorious Baroque conception escaped bombing, the lawns and carvings suffered at the hands of the Allied troops stationed in Caserta in 1944 and 1945. Valuable bushes were torn up, stonework was chipped and broken and flower-beds destroyed. Years must pass before this park can be restored to its original condition.

There is also an "English" garden, which contains fine trees and plants, but it is of minor interest since the climate does not lend itself to horticulture of this nature.

From the terrace above the cascade there is an extensive view of the gardens, the palace and the surrounding countryside. Caserta Vecchia, farther up the hillside, is an ancient village which has a thirteenth-century castle, a cathedral of the Norman period and a number of ancient houses.

The road from Caserta to Naples is flat and passes through rather unattractive country. The entry of the city from this side is frankly rather disappointing. The houses are of nondescript Victorian architecture, the streets rather sordid and the population seems colourless. Nevertheless the stranger soon gains the impression that he is in a metropolis, even though it may be, as the northern Italians say, rather unkindly, "An Oriental town without a European quarter". I do not agree with this sentiment. Naples is still in some respects the capital of southern Italy and is a place of real interest, quite apart from its splendid setting and countless monuments.

Curiously enough, apart from the temple at Paestum, there remain few tangible traces of the three or four centuries of Hellenic colonization of this region. Even from the racial point of view, it is difficult to imagine that the Neapolitans have a fair admixture of Greek blood in their veins, though the original type is recognizable in one or two places, such as, for instance, the Island of Procida.

In Roman times, Naples and the surrounding district became popular about a century and a half before the birth of Christ and remained so even after the eruption that destroyed Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabia in the year A.D. 79.

When the Barbarian invasions surged over the Roman Empire, southern Italy was also overwhelmed, but much of it was reconquered by the Byzantine General Belisarius.

Towards the end of the sixth century the Teutonic Lombards came down from the North and occupied most regions except the districts in the immediate vicinity of Naples. Later some of their Norman mercenaries broke away from them and started a systematic conquest of Sicily from whence they drove out the Saracens.

On the mainland they occupied the greater part of the peninsula up to within about eighty miles of the latitude of Rome.

In 1194, the Hohenstaufen Emperors of Germany, established themselves as kings of Naples and Sicily, and for about fifty years Frederick II, one of the greatest of mediaeval monarchs, ruled this realm despotically, but gave great encouragement to the arts and to literature. A philosopher and a man of culture, he was in close contact with Saladin and with the Arab civilization.

After various vicissitudes, his grandson Conradin was supplanted and killed by Charles, Count of Anjou, to whom the Crown had been offered by Pope Urban IV.

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Fourteen years later the Angevins were driven out by a large-scale rebellion in Sicily (the Sicilian Vespers) and replaced on the island by the Kings of Aragon. On the mainland the House of Anjou continued to rule with fluctuating fortunes until 1442, when they were replaced by the Aragoneses.

Half a century afterwards, Charles VIII of France claimed the throne of Naples and succeeded in entering it amid the acclamations of the populace. He was driven out a few years later by the Spanish. In 1707 the Habsburgs were succeeded by the Bourbons. In 1734, a junior branch of this family was established in the monarchy of Naples, whilst the senior branch remained in Spain.

The Bourbons were despotic rulers, but it must be said in their favour that their first representatives encouraged the arts and were at any rate popular with the *lazzaroni*, the lower classes of their capital. In Roman times, the creation of vast estates had tended to ruin agriculture in southern Italy. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the absentee landlords who spent most of their time at Court, neglected their tenants and so increased their poverty.

The corruptness and economic distress of the masses made Naples an easy prey to the conquering armies of Napoleon. However, in 1799, they were driven out by a popular rising in Calabria supported by the British Fleet under Lord Nelson. It was during this period that the Admiral met Emma, Lady Hamilton, wife of the English Ambassador, Sir William Hamilton. This ex-kitchenmaid, not only became the famous sailor's mistress, but she also exercised a great influence on the Queen Marie Carolina, sister of Marie Antoinette of France.

On their return the Bourbons made themselves rapidly unpopular by the brutal way in which they retaliated on French sympathizers, and more especially because they caused Nelson to execute Admiral Carriaciolo, the heroic scion of a noble family.

After a brief period as a republic, Naples became a tributary kingdom of the French Empire under the rule of Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon. When the former was transferred to Spain, his place was taken by Joachim Murat, husband of the Emperor's sister Caroline, a cavalry leader of great courage who had started life as a potboy. Sicily remained in the hands of the Bourbons, but in practice it was governed constitutionally by the British diplomat, Lord William Bentinck.

Though Murat followed the Grand Army to Russia, and even commanded it during the last phases of the retreat, he abandoned his troops eventually in order to see whether he could save his crown. According to reasonably conclusive evidence, he had been preparing to betray his master for some time. When Napoleon was desperately trying to defend the approaches to Paris in the winter of 1813, the Neapolitan troops joined forces with the enemy and attacked the French garrisons of northern Italy. Napoleon was sent to Elba, but King Joachim was allowed to stay in Naples because of the support that he had given the Allies.

In 1815, during the Hundred Days, urged on by his conscience or more probably by his ambition to dominate the whole of Italy, he attempted to drive the Austrians out of the north of the peninsula, but was easily defeated and even forced to flee from the country. He arrived in France soon enough to have participated in the Battle of Waterloo, but his offer to serve was indignantly refused, though his talents as a cavalry general might well have turned that defeat into a victory.

In September, he tried to emulate his brother-in-law and reconquer his former kingdom. When he landed in Calabria with a few supporters, there was no response from his ex-subjects and he was very quickly captured and soon afterwards shot.

The Bourbon reaction was accompanied by such misrule that Garibaldi's legionnaires were allowed to disembark on the mainland in 1860 after their astonishing campaign in Sicily, and the Neapolitan troops put up only a feeble resistance. After the surrender of King Francis II at Gaeta in 1861, Sicily and Naples became part of United Italy under Victor Emmanuel II of Savoy.

XVI

NAPLES, POSILLIPO, PROCIDA AND ISCHIA

*Naples and the Neapolitans. Posillipo. Pozzuoli. Phlegraean Fields.
Procida and Ischia.*

IF NAPLES cannot boast of churches and monuments as renowned as those of central and northern Italy, its fame rests chiefly on the splendour of its setting, and the beauty of its surrounding countryside. The right way to approach this capital of the south is undoubtedly from the sea.

As the ship draws near, Vesuvius towers up on the right with a white plume of smoke drifting slowly from its summit. Nearer by the rocky outline of Capri rises up indigo or dull purple against the deep blue water, whilst Ischia with the tall hill of Epomeo acts as sentinel on the other side of the bay.

To the south stretches the long arm of the Sorrento peninsula, dark green with strings of white houses near the shore showing up clearly at the base of a ridge of hills and mountains. Red-sailed fishing-boats and dazzlingly white yachts glide past in the sunshine, whilst the city gradually takes shape in the blinding light.

Naples, like Genoa, is spread out in a vast amphitheatre sloping upwards more steeply in some places than others. The massive fortress named Castel S. Elmo juts out from the heights of the Vomero, a recently developed residential quarter.

Just below it is the former monastery of San Martino, from which there is a splendid view.

On the same level, but two or three miles to the right, is the red-brick Palace of Capodimonte, built as a Royal summer palace in the eighteenth century. It contains a collection of porcelain from the former factory of the same name.

Farther to the south, the mountains draw away from the sea, until

the foothills of Vesuvius are reached, but on the coast densely populated suburbs succeed each other without interruption: S. Giovanni, Portici, Torre del Greco. Then later, on the far side of the volcano, come Torre Annunziata, and finally, at the base of the Sorrento Peninsula, Castellammare.

To the north of Naples, the heights of the Vomero are continued in an unbroken ridge by upper Posillipo which terminates with a steep drop to the sea. Cape Misena projects a few miles beyond this promontory. On the far side of the Bay of Pozzuoli, is the Island of Procida, which lies half-way between the mainland and Ischia.

As the ship approaches the entrance of the port, the detail of the city and its immediate surroundings become discernible. Inside the harbour there is the usual tangled mass of masts and rigging. Just above the mole rise up the five towers of Castel Nuovo, the immense castle built by the Angevins in the thirteenth century. Next to it stands the Royal Palace, with its long terraced façade. Above, but to the left is the Pizzofalcone, a hill with precipitous sides where the first Greeks settled in the seventh century before Christ.

Just below this eminence is the Castello dell'Ovo on a small island connected to the quayside by a stone pier. This bare bleak castle was constructed in the early thirteenth century by Frederick II, the greatest of mediæval emperors.

A little farther on stretch the waterside gardens that line the Via Carraciolo, and then gradually the scenery becomes less urban. Above, double rows of trees mark the avenues that wind up to the heights of the Vomero.

On the coast there are big hotels and large white blocks of flats. Gradually the houses grow scarcer, and give way to patches of trees. For the most part the shore is rocky and full of inlets. Splendid villas with extensive grounds stand out because of the brilliant green of their vegetation.

The port of Naples is like almost any other large harbour. It has ships of every kind from all parts of the world, but those plying with eastern countries predominate, and already one senses vaguely the atmosphere of the Orient, in spite of the trim-looking units of the Italian navy that berth in the northern section of the docks.

The Neapolitans are often romanticized, and frequently criticized because they are apt to be misunderstood. Their behaviour is conditioned by hundreds of years of foreign domination, by the ad-

NAPLES, POSSILLIPO, PROCIDA AND ISCHIA

mixture of Greek, Arab and Norman blood in their veins, and lastly by the beauty of the scenery that surrounds them and by the perpetual sunshine that they enjoy.

With them, perhaps even more than with other Italians, the cult of the family comes before anything else. They will fight courageously to defend their wives or their children, even if they are reluctant to take up arms for their country.

Being shrewd and intelligent in business, they love the act of bargaining far more than the profit that they may make by a deal.

They are near to the earth and sometimes materialists, yet they remain for the most part superstitious. If you live a long time among them, you tend to give some credence to their beliefs, because this is an ancient land, older by far than Rome. The gods that lurk in the olive groves and rocky hills of the countryside come from Hellas, if indeed they were not there before the Greeks. In spite of the blue skies and brilliant seas, there is ever present in the background, the menace of destruction by earthquake or eruption. . . .

If Naples has produced no great painters, no renowned architects or writers, she has played her part in creating the modern theatre. Shakespeare, Molière and their successors derived a great part of their inspiration from the *Commedia dell'Arte* whose stock characters came from all parts of Italy. Arlecchino (Harlequin) was a northerner, and so was his daughter Columbina. Pedrolino (Pierrot) is said by some to be a Tuscan, but Pulcinella is in every way a Neapolitan. This hunchback, irascible, shrewd, jealous, credulous and witty, has made children laugh in all parts of the world as the principal actor in Punch and Judy shows. The story varies, but the human element is always the same. According to some authorities, the role was created by a vintner who lived not far from Naples and joined a company of strolling players and so immortalized his human frailties and those of his fellow citizens who certainly do know how to laugh at themselves.

The Via Roma, the main artery of the city, is a long narrow street that goes from the Square adjacent to the Royal Palace and the San Carlo Theatre to the National Museum, nearly a mile and a half away. It is still sometimes referred to as the Toledo, after the Spanish Viceroy, Pedro de Toledo, who caused it to be cut.

As a thoroughfare it has little to commend it, for neither the fairway nor the pavement are wide enough for the constant flow of

people who use it. In the bustle, hurry and noise, one is scarcely conscious that it has no buildings of note, for it has the great virtue of being near to the pulsating, passionate life of a really colourful city.

The streets that converge into it from the west are, for the most part, full of shops and offices and have no particular character. On the other side narrow alleys rise steeply through one of the older quarters of the town. It is in a district of this kind that are to be found the Neapolitans of fiction who sing their way through life and subsist on a plate of pasta and a glass or two of wine. The craftsmen work in their open shops, the women sew or knit on their doorsteps, the children play on the pavement, just as they have always done.

This is the populace of Naples, so noted among foreigners who are apt to ignore the tradition of learning of its ancient university, its shipyards, its industries, and the rich agricultural production of its countryside.

Still it is from such streets that come the singers, who like Caruso, can move the people to tears and laughter, and the light melodies that bring so much happiness.

The Museo Nazionale has one of the finest collections of statuary and classical paintings in the world. Besides having the best of the art treasures found in Pompeii and Herculaneum, there are also many pieces that were unearthed in other parts of Italy. Among the best of the exhibits are the Farnese Bull from the Baths of Caracalla, the Hercules from the same place, the "Statue of a Running Girl" and the graceful Venus Callipygus. Besides these there are numerous fauns, nymphs and satyrs, which give a good collective representation of the classical feeling for nature.

The bronzes come mainly from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Though presumably of Roman workmanship, many of them are of interest, especially the far-famed dancing satyr and "The Young Apollo". The murals, taken from excavations made in the Naples region, are of outstanding interest because they depict so well life in the cities like Pompeii and Stabia at the time when they were overwhelmed by the great eruption of A.D. 79.

There are of course a great many scenes of a mythological character, but others show people at work and at play and even give one a fair conception of the prevailing fashions of the period.

The mosaics which display an astonishing variety of shades and

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colours treat more or less the same subjects and are for the most part of superior artistic value.

In any other country but Italy, the Picture Gallery of the Museum would alone be considered a sufficient inducement for coming to Naples. It is a collection that covers a wide range of schools and periods, from Umbrian and Tuscan primitives, Correggios and Titians to the later and rather uninspiring Neapolitans. There are also the "Parable of the Blind Men", one of Peter Breughel's major works, four cartoons by Michelangelo, besides a host of important paintings which I cannot enumerate here.

Near by the catacombs of San Gennaro, entered through the church of the same name, contain a considerable number of Byzantine mural paintings dating from the third to the eighth century B.C. These caverns are far better built and better preserved than those in Rome and equally interesting.

During the repeated bombardments of Naples by the Allies and later by the Germans, most of the churches in the city were damaged in varying degrees, but by great fortune, the Cathedral did not suffer too badly.

Originally constructed in the thirteenth century by the Angevins, it has been frequently restored and altered. Its main points of interest are the frescoes in some of the chapels, and the Chapel of San Gennaro, patron of the town.

This saint lived and died in Benevento, but a phial containing his congealed blood was brought to Naples in the early days of Christianity. It is kept on the high altar in a shrine, but it is taken out twice a year in solemn ceremony. On the first of May, it is, in normal times, taken to the Church of Santa Chiara (much damaged but due to be restored). On the fifteenth of September it is shown to the populace in the Cathedral.

If the blood liquifies quickly, Neapolitans believe that the ensuing half year will be a lucky one. If, as often happens, the process is slow, then trouble and misfortune are anticipated.

Splendid as are many of the churches in Naples, it is the street scene and the surrounding resorts that attract the foreigner. In the district of Santa Lucia, on the wharfs facing the Castello dell'Ovo there are waterside restaurants where diners are entertained with Neapolitan music and singing. On the Vomero there are places with terraces overlooking the bay which vary considerably in their

charges and the fare that is provided. In Posillipo Alto there are one or two luxurious night clubs with floor shows and dancing out of doors.

Personally, I am content to try my luck in the back streets and feed with the locals. The draught wines of Vesuvius are excellent and one or two of them stand icing, but the best cold drink of all, the bottled Corvo, also white, comes from Sicily.

The shell fish is tempting but should be avoided. Of the local dishes, the *Pizza* is to be found everywhere. It is a tart, of which the usual ingredients are cheese, tomato, paprika and anchovy, but there are many varieties of preparing this savoury which is eaten at the beginning of a meal instead of *pasta* or macaroni.

Beyond the Castello dell'Ovo the road hugs the shore for a mile and a half, passing a picturesque palace in ruins that looks as if it dates back to the days of the Romans. Built on a rock almost at sea-level, on calm days its outline is reflected in the water. It was constructed for the Duchess of Medina, wife of one of the Spanish viceroys in the seventeenth century. For some reason or other it was never completed.

The road rises a little and breaks away from the coast, which curves slightly so that there is a splendid view of Naples, of the Sorrento Peninsula and of Capri.

At one place a secondary road leads down to the beach past the Villa Lante to a small fishing harbour where there are two waterside restaurants which have the great advantage of being relatively quiet.

At Marechiaro, another fishing village, a little farther on, the scene is more lively, particularly on Sundays when the Neapolitans come to bathe, drink and eat on the terraces of the two or three taverns. The water is only moderately clean here, so I have always found it better to hire a boat and row round the point before venturing to go in.

A short way out on the far side of Cape Posillipo is the island of Nisida where Brutus is said to have planned to overthrow Caesar with Cassius.

On the far side of the promontory of Posillipo, there is a flat and uninteresting plain that is crossed by the Cumana railway that goes from the centre of Naples to Pozzuoli, Baia and Torre Gaveta where boats can be hired to go to Procida and Ischia. Bagnoli, the first stop

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on the bay of Pozzuoli, was formerly a popular bathing resort, but it has been spoilt by the erection of works and factories.

Beyond this begin the Phlegraean fields, a volcanic region full of extinct craters, traditionally supposed to be the scene of the battle between Hercules and the Giants. Eighteenth-century travellers made a point of visiting this district to see the Solfatara where there are a great many *fumaroles*, fissures in the earth from which there is a flow of steam. It is a desolate and muddy place which has little to commend it except as a curiosity.

Pozzuoli, in the centre of the bay, was a very prosperous Roman city and has the remains of a large amphitheatre, baths and temples, but these ruins are of relatively small interest compared with those of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The Cathedral incorporates some columns that were part of a shrine to Augustus.

To the west there are more works near the shore which is disfigured anyway by enormous nineteenth-century bathing establishments frequented in the summer by the less prosperous citizens of Naples.

A few minutes away from the coast road is the Lake of Avernus, an extinct crater filled with water which was held by the ancients to be the entrance to Hades.

Baia, like Pozzuoli, was very fashionable in the days of the Roman Empire. The view was much admired, and the rich built magnificent villas near the beach. Apart from the prospect of the bay it has little to commend it to-day.

A coast road follows the southern side of the peninsula and leads to Miseno which is situated on what was formerly an island detached from the mainland. In the centre there is a hill from which there is an astonishingly beautiful panorama of the hills of Posillipo, the far side of the Bay of Naples and of Vesuvius.

The railway comes to a full stop at Torre Gaveta situated on a beach of dark grey sand which stretches for many miles to the north. The ruins of Cuma, about a mile away, are of more interest to the enthusiastic student of the classics and of archaeology than to the ordinary layman.

The best way to go to Procida and Ischia is certainly by steamer from Naples harbour, especially if the sea is smooth. The passage takes about a couple of hours, and during the whole time the boat keeps near the shore so that one gets a splendid view of Posillipo, the

Bay of Pozzuoli and of course of Vesuvius and Capri in the distance.

Procida is an island, not more than two miles long and perhaps a mile and a half in width at its broadest point. Nevertheless it is very fertile and has about thirteen thousand inhabitants.

Lured by the more sensational attractions of Capri, Sorrento or even Ischia, few foreigners take the trouble to visit it, although it has a charm all of its own.

The small harbour with its painted boats and eastern-looking houses is unspoilt and uncommercialized. A few hundred yards to the south, on a rocky eminence, but now used as a reformatory, is a former royal summer residence. The Bourbon kings used it as a shooting box, for many pheasants used to fly over the whole island. In order to preserve the game a law was passed in the eighteenth century forbidding the populace to keep cats or dogs. The result was that rats and mice became so numerous that even small children were no longer safe from their attacks.

The people of Procida claim that they are of pure Greek descent and there is evidence to show that it was not only a colony of the Syracusans in the fifth century B.C., but also of the Byzantines in the eleventh century A.D.

This second contention is problematic, but even to-day the christening robes used are of a Greek design. The attractive national costume has entirely disappeared. At the far end of the island is a pleasant sandy beach which is deserted at most times of the year. It is reached by a lane that is overhung on either side by lemon trees which bear fruit as big as melons and just about as tasteless. The local wine, deep amber in colour is very potent but of excellent quality.

Between Ischia and Procida lies the small island of Vivara which is uninhabited and quite wild.

Ischia can be seen from a long way off because it centres round Mount Epomeo, which is nearly two thousand six hundred feet high. It was created by a volcano which rose out of the sea, and the foothills around it are subsidiary craters. Tradition has it that Eneas landed here with his band of fugitives on his way northwards.

Like Procida it was colonized by the Greeks of Syracuse who began to use its countless thermal springs.

The Emperor Augustus exchanged it for Capri to please what the local guide books call his "most pure and beautiful daughter Julia".

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Capri does not seem to have done the girl's morals much good, for she became so depraved that her father exiled her to the Ponzo Islands where she died of starvation. The people of Ischia, who are inclined to be jealous of their more prosperous neighbour, declare that it served her right. They say that if she had stayed where she was she would not have been corrupted.

The island suffered the usual vicissitudes that beset the other places on this coast. It was occupied by the Goths, the Vandals, the Saracens and the Pisans, then later by the Normans, the Angevins and the Aragonese.

The inhabitants have more Spanish blood than their neighbours, for as Norman Douglas writes in *Summer Islands*, Alphonso the Magnanimous (of Aragon) removed the whole of the male population and replaced them with his troops.

Mount Epomeo has been extinct for seven and a half centuries for the last eruption was in 1302. There has been a number of important earthquakes, the last one in 1882 caused seventeen hundred deaths.

In spite of this ever recurrent danger, the peasants cling to these volcanic regions because the land is fertile, and also because of a traditional belief that the soil makes men virile and women prolific. . . .

The harbour of Porto d'Ischia is formed out of an extinct volcano. If the town is pleasant and not exceptionally picturesque, the sandy beach backed by pinewoods is delightful and has fine views.

A mile or two to the south, the Castello d'Ischia is built on a small island connected to the shore by a causeway.

There had been a fortress on this site since the conquest by the Greeks of Syracuse, but it was not until the fifteenth century that one of the Aragonese Kings selected it as a place to construct a splendid summer residence. In the first half of the sixteenth century it was occupied by Vittoria Colonna who was loved platonically by Michelangelo. She was a poetess of note and the friend of most of the artistic and literary figures of her time including Tasso.

Later the castle was allowed to fall into decay, but it is attractive because of its splendid natural setting and beautiful views, its subterranean church and mural painting.

Until forty years ago there were roads only on the east side of the island, which has little of architectural interest as so many buildings were destroyed in the last earthquake.

The twenty-mile trip round Ischia is worth taking, even by the motor bus that does the journey two or three times a day, for as an eighteenth-century traveller wrote:

"The island is charming to the highest degree. Here a far projecting rock is connected with the land by a slender cape; and there detached cliffs tower above the sea. Each form seems cast with a bold yet playful hand; and every moment affords a various prospect."

Casamicciola, three miles to the north of Porto d'Ischia, is a rather nondescript town with a large number of bathing establishments and thermal springs reputed to cure almost every known disease. The countryside, however, is charming and has an infinite variety of flowers, plants and trees.

Lacco Ameno, the next place, is of much the same type, but from both there are lovely views of the coast and behind them steep paths lead to the summit of Epomeo.

The west side of Ischia is far more attractive because it has kept its rustic character.

Forio, a town of five or six thousand inhabitants, has a stone harbour where the coastal schooners berth. The water is as clean as at Capri and of clear aquamarine colour. There are one or two old towers transformed by painters into studios, and three or four simple restaurants that serve country food and the excellent white wine of Ischia.

Beyond Forio the road rises and winds among the hills to a height of twelve hundred feet at Serrara on the fourth mile. From here it is possible to climb through the woods to the top of Epomeo and get a view which extends from Ponza and Gaeta to Monte Cava which towers above Sorrento.

On the shore below Serrara is the small fishing village of S. Angelo accessible by a rough track but far more easily reached by boat. Near to it the coast is wild and deserted, full of rocky coves and inlets, and the sea is clear of all the refuse and dirt that spoils swimming in the Bay of Naples.

The people on this side of the island are courteous and reserved and exceedingly good looking. Unlike their neighbours of Casamicciola and Porto d'Ischia, they are first-class seamen and noted for their courage.

They have kept something of the spirit of ancient Greece, when men were near to nature and found much beauty in it. An episode

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related by the traveller, Count Stolberg, illustrates this sentiment very well. The incident seems improbable but I am inclined to believe it.

“When we had accomplished the best half of our passage (from Ischia to Capri) the boatmen suddenly threw down their oars and began to whistle. A quantity of dolphins came round us and rose out of the water, with curving bounds very near to our vessel. This spectacle continued a considerable time, and we saw many coming from a distance. . . .

“You see that the fable of Arion, whose song collected the dolphins around him is not entirely without foundation.”

XVII

CAPRI AND THE SORRENTO PENINSULAR

Capri. Vesuvius. Pompeii. Sorrento. Positano. Amalfi. Ravello. Salerno.

EVERY MORNING in the summer a fleet of excursion steamers sets out for Capri from Naples. They carry a full complement of tourists who hope to capture all its joys in the space of a few hours. To save time many of the ships anchor outside the Blue Grotto. Here the rowing boats queue up with their load of eager tourists, who are granted a brief vision of this natural curiosity. Afterwards they are landed at the Marina, where they wait their turn to go up to the town of Capri by carriage, car or funicular. They are given the opportunity to have a drink at one of the cafés made famous by many noted writers. After lunch at one of the restaurants they see what they can of the rest of the island, and they return by the afternoon boat loaded with coral beads, huge straw hats and souvenirs.

There are perhaps a dozen islands in the Tyrrhenian Sea which are almost as attractive and have so far been neglected by holidaymakers. I say almost, because Capri is unique in spite of the trippers, the film stars, the publicity, the souvenirs sold at inflated prices and the commercialization of its charms. Nowhere else is the light so beautiful, the sea so clear and the scenery so varied in such a small compass. So if you have not been there, go there all the same, but choose your moment wisely.

It was Augustus, or rather his daughter Julia, who first discovered Capri, but it was one of his successors Tiberius who made it notorious. This emperor retired there in A.D. 27 and, according to Suetonius, he spent the last ten years of his life in debauchery. Some authorities claim that this report is grossly exaggerated, but whether they are right or wrong, Timburino, as he is called in Capri, built no less than

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twelve villas, the remains of which are still to be seen in various parts of the island.

During the Napoleonic wars it was occupied for two years by British troops under Hudson Lowe, who was later to be the Emperor's gaoler at St. Helena. In 1808 Capri was recaptured by Murat's French soldiers, just as a fleet had appeared on the horizon to relieve the besieged garrison.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Capri became a favourite place of residence for painters and writers of all nations, and I suppose it is the latter who have destroyed its calm by publicizing it in their books.

The island is only four miles long and two miles broad, at its widest, but the hills and indentations of the coast make it seem much larger. The town of Capri is situated high up on a neck of land that joins two mountainous tracts.

On the south side is the beach of Marina Piccola, and on the north the little harbour of Marina Grande, linked up to the city by a funicular.

The famous Blue Grotto, rediscovered a hundred years ago by two Englishmen, certainly lives up to its reputation. Access to it is by boat through a low entrance at sea level in the cliffs. The water is a brilliant aquamarine, and the light that filters in from outside has a gamut of shades that vary from deep purple to pale blue.

Capri, the town, has great charm because of its rather eastern-looking architecture, and the square which is its social centre. Rocky paths lead through vineyards to villas set in beautiful gardens in all sorts of unexpected places and there is a road to Anacapri, two miles away and nearly a thousand feet above sea level.

Monte Solaro, two thousand feet high, lies just to the south of this village. From its summit, there is the finest among the many views that are to be obtained in Capri. On a clear day it is possible to see down to the highlands of Calabria, and to the east to the distant peaks of the Abruzzi which are snow-covered for a great part of the year. Nearer by there is the full sweep of the Bay of Naples, the promontory of Gaeta to the north, and to the south the Gulf of Salerno and the hills above Paestum. Three or four miles away is the peninsula of Sorrento, of varying shades of green on the coast, turning to pale grey with the rise of the slopes.

If the present-day traveller sets out in search of sunshine, blue water and fine scenery, our ancestors took greater pleasure in explor-

ing the more sinister wonders of nature. They came to Naples primarily to see classical remains such as the Sybil's Grotto in the Phlegraean Fields, and other remains of little attraction and rather doubtful origin. They loved places like the Solfatara and the cave of the dog with its layer of low-lying natural gas that asphyxiates small animals but spares human beings because of their greater height. As may well be imagined they never ceased to be filled with awe and amazement at the sight of Vesuvius, its crater and its frequent eruptions.

The volcano was extinct for centuries and its nature was only suspected because of the coating of lava on its slopes.

In A.D. 63 it revealed its presence by an earthquake, followed the next year by an eruption that submerged parts of Pompeii, Herculaneum and other places in the vicinity. Finally, in A.D. 79, there was so violent a discharge of ashes that these towns were overwhelmed by the tempest. So unexpected was the universal death that most of the people of Pompeii were at the theatre.

"Large clouds of smoke rose up from the crater in the form of a pine tree, then sank under its own weight and extended itself. The spectacle was so terrifying that people awaited in expectation of the end of the world."

So wrote Pliny the Younger, who watched from afar whilst his more famous uncle, the naturalist, who was at sea, sailed near in to make his observations and was asphyxiated by the ashes.

Ever since that year Vesuvius has continued to smoke and from time to time to send forth eruptions, of which about forty have been distinguished from the rest by the length of their duration or their violence. The mountain belches forth flames almost every year, generally in the autumn, and sometimes twice a year.

In 1631 the volcano had been quiescent for a hundred and thirty years, when it was shaken with unusual violence. A great part of the mountain fell in, and huge streams of lava poured down, destroying the forests that had grown up on its slopes and swept into Portici, Torre del Greco and other coastal towns.

Eruptions on almost as large a scale have occurred at intervals since that date, and more frequently great volumes of ashes are cast up on to the surrounding countryside. I have seen five or six miles of the Salerno road, three or four feet deep in black volcanic dust that made transit quite impossible.

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I have never witnessed a full eruption or even one of the type which a traveller described as follows:

"Yesterday evening we beheld the flaming cataracts of lava burst forth. The reflection produced by the heat glowed in the waves of the sea; the moon appeared to grow paler in the presence of the streaming fire, which at times looked like a distant waterfall, without revealing whether it was in motion. From time to time the fire very clearly rose out of the summit, and was followed by flames bursting from a new aperture."

The ascent of Vesuvius, formerly an arduous matter, can be undertaken by the railway constructed many years ago by Thomas Cook and Son. The line passes through the vineyards which produce *Lacrima Christi*, *Vesuvio* and other excellent white wines. Finally it reaches the barren region of lava.

The ash cone at the summit of the mountain is equipped with a funicular to take passengers to within a few minutes of the observatory, close on four thousand feet up. From here there is a prospect of the Bay of Naples and of the coast right up to Monte Circeo.

Pompeii is best reached by the autostrada that connects Naples and by-passes the populous satellite cities of Portici, Resina, Torre del Greco and Torre Annunziata, places which have long since lost the picturesqueness which filled the travellers of the past with such delight.

The ruins of Herculaneum are forty feet below ground under a hard crust of volcanic rock which covered them at the time of the great eruption of A.D. 79. Since it is necessary to go underground in order to see them they can be of interest only to archaeologists, especially as the best of the statues and other objects found there are in the Museo Nazionale at Naples. With the modern methods of excavations now being employed it is likely that there will be many new and astonishing discoveries here, because everything has been preserved from interference, and more or less sealed up by the thick layer made by the eruption.

The autostrada is rather soulless like most arterial roads of its type, and yet, in the springtime it has a certain charm. On one side the ground slopes down to the sea, which can be seen two or three miles away. On the other, it rises up gently to the base of Vesuvius. One catches glimpses of peach orchards in full bloom, and here and

there of small houses of Saracenic type or of country villas with red tiled roofs and pink or yellow stucco walls.

Pompeii is reached rather unexpectedly, and one is almost surprised to see the ruins spring up on the other side of a fence, just as if they had been planted there by a gigantic hand. A city of twenty thousand inhabitants, it was not like Herculaneum buried in lava, but by ashes, so that it has remained on the earth's surface and is relatively easy to excavate.

Much of it had been rebuilt in the modern style of the period after the destructive eruption of A.D. 64. Other parts of it were awaiting restoration when they were engulfed once more fifteen years later.

As most of the inhabitants succeeded in escaping, many of them came back to remove their possessions after the return of normal conditions.

A first attempt to bring the ruins to light was made in the eighteenth century but it was not until 1860 that the city was cleared up systematically. Though much remains to be excavated, it is possible now to get a very fair idea of what a Roman city looked like shortly after the death of Nero.

The streets had raised pavements like those of our towns to-day, a feature that greatly impressed the travellers of the past. There were of course a theatre, a forum and a basilica, in which to discuss public business, but the place was only half fortified.

A part of Pompeii dates back to the time of the Greek settlements, for at least one of the temples belongs to this period.

Glass was used only to a limited extent, so that the shops opened out straight on to the streets, just as in England in the Middle Ages and in some of the older parts of Naples to-day.

The most striking feature is perhaps the well-preserved mural paintings and mosaics, some of which depict contemporary life and many more, scenes from Mythology. The best of these, however, are under lock and key in houses which can be opened up on request.

The really astonishing thing about Pompeii is the variety of architecture and of types of buildings that can be seen within its confines.

Quite apart from its archaeological and historic interest it is worth visiting because of the strange beauty of the ruins in their rustic setting. You can stand in the forum among the melancholy remains of the past and see the blue mass of Vesuvius rising against the foreground of arches and broken pillars. In other places, it is possible

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to look out on to the Bay of Naples and Capri in the distance through a framework of columns or through a crumbling gateway.

The general impression that I have always had is of the unchanging character and ways of the Italians. There are the inscriptions scrawled on the walls of Pompeii, such as those that can be found in any town in the peninsula to-day. The tiles and the architectural forms still persist in the countryside, though in the cities they have been replaced by the concrete and chromium plate of the Western world.

Beyond the ruined city, the main highway to Salerno branches off to the left through modern Pompeii, a hideous place with a huge and rather new church. The coast road that passes through Sorrento, Positano and Amalfi, turns off sharply to the right and provides one of the most beautiful drives in the whole of Europe.

Castellammare, the first place on this route, is a semi-industrial town with large dockyards, though it is also a spa and a seaside resort of secondary importance.

From here a direct road goes over the mountains to Amalfi and passes through astonishing and rather unusual scenery. It rises steeply up through luxuriant vineyards and orchards to the zone of chestnut woods. From the heights there are extensive views of the surrounding mountains and of the Bay of Naples. After passing through some hamlets it reaches Agerola, a village over two thousand feet above the sea level, and frequented by summer visitors because of its coolness.

When the road begins to drop on the far side, there is a fine prospect of the coast between Positano and Amalfi.

Beyond Castellammare, begins the real riviera of the Sorrento Peninsula. The highway follows the constant curves of the coast, through pine groves and clumps of olive trees, passing gardens filled with flowers and flowering bushes of a semi-tropical type. Two or three hundred feet below rocky coves and inlets border a sea of the most vivid blue.

At Pozzano a red-roofed monastery overhangs the bay on its green hill. Vico Equenses, on a height above the shore, is an attractive little town. It has a pleasing rococo cathedral and some brightly painted villas.

It was here that the hunchback son of King Charles of Naples built a villa, in which was enacted a curious mediaeval scene. When the daughter of this cripple was asked in marriage for the son of

King Philippe le Hardi, some doubts were expressed as to her physical fitness by the French envoys. The princess, who was most anxious to make the match, solved this difficulty by taking off her dress and appearing before the Court completely naked.

At Seiano the highway goes down into the plain of Sorrento, after passing through Meta, a small town with a harbour for fishing boats. From this place a secondary road goes to Amalfi over the mountains. About half-way across there is a particularly fine view from the former monastery of Camaldoli.

Sorrento is situated on a hill in a green valley that is inaccessible from the sea on all sides, for the rocks in the form of a sickle are high and steep. Protected from the south and the east by the mountains, it is cool in summer and enjoys a kind of perpetual spring. The vegetation here is particularly abundant, and there are not only orange and lemon gardens, but an infinite variety of flowers, blossoming trees and creepers.

Without having any outstanding monuments, Sorrento is a city of pleasant streets with a few ancient palaces, and a number of villas and hotels on the edge of the cliffs overlooking the Bay of Naples. Access to the beach is by underground stairways carved out of the solid rock.

At night no one should miss the complete panorama of the lights of the coastal towns from Possillipo to Torre del Greco and of Ischia in the distance.

For over five centuries, Sorrento has been frequented by writers, beginning with Tasso who was born here in 1544 down to Benedetto Croce and Norman Douglas in the present day.

Nietzsche, Maxim Gorki and Harriet Beecher Stowe (of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fame) all made prolonged stays at the Hotel Tramontana, a delightful old hostelry which has been in the hands of the same family for three generations. In the last hundred years the Tramontanas have been dispensing their courteous hospitality to crowned heads, authors, painters and musicians, with most of whom they have been on terms of friendship.

During the Second World War, when it was a convalescent home for British officers, I was received with particular kindness—as an old client of many years standing.

At Sorrento, as in most places of the Naples region, the Tarantella is danced mainly, it must be admitted, for the benefit of tourists.

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The movements originated, so it is said, to cure the poisoned bite of the Tarantula spider which is common in the Mediterranean.

Another suggestion is that this dance was introduced to southern Italy by the Spaniards who had learned it during the Arab occupation of their country.

Though the Aragonese may have had an influence here, the dialect of Sorrento is full of Greek-sounding inflections and "O's" are pronounced as "U's".

Massalubrense is the last place accessible by road on the north side of the peninsula which projects another three miles into the sea. It is a small hamlet with two rustic inns which serve the best of country food and wine on terraces that face Capri only five or six thousand yards away.

Positano, on the south side of the promontory, is a considerable village spread out over the hillside in an amphitheatre. It has for some years been the resort of painters and writers of many nations, because of the singular beauty of the landscape and the great charm of its little white houses which are like those of the Greek islands.

A few miles away to the west are a group of rocky islands traditionally supposed to be those where the sirens sat and lured sailors to destruction.

The road continues its winding way along the coast, alternatively rising a few hundred feet and dropping to sea level, passing by a succession of villages and attractive villas covered with flowering creepers.

Amalfi, an ancient town of some six thousand inhabitants, has had an astonishing history. For over two centuries it was a dominant maritime power in the Mediterranean, though in theory a tributary republic of the Byzantine Empire. Her fleets scoured the seas and transported vast numbers of Crusaders to the Holy Land. Her territories comprised the whole of the coast from Positano to Vietri and their prosperity was great until her ships were defeated by the Pisans and after the Normans had captured the city in 1131.

Since most contemporary records have disappeared little is known about the development and life of this small state, which must have been, like Gaeta, completely Greek in character. Some of her citizens brought Justinian's code of laws from Constantinople to Europe. Another one named Flavio Gioia invented the compass in the thir-

teenth century, whilst the *Tavola Amalfitane* served as the basis for modern regulations that govern shipping at sea.

Out of the mist of the past a few lines by a chronicler reveal the cosmopolitan character that distinguished it.

"In this town," he wrote, "Arabs, Lybians and Africans are to be seen."

Even after a great deal of reconstruction in the Middle Ages, and restoration in the nineteenth century, there are obvious traces of Eastern influences in the structure and decorations of the cathedral. The bronze doors inlaid with silver were brought from Constantinople before 1050.

The delightful cloisters of Paradise, adjoining the church, are inspired by Arab art, and can be compared to those of St. John the Hermit in Palermo.

Just as St. George is the patron saint of Portofino, the body of St. Andrew is revered in Amalfi, for it was buried in the crypt of the cathedral where it was brought from Byzantium in the thirteenth century.

The climate in this part of the coast is particularly mild in winter, so it is not surprising that it is visited by a considerable number of foreigners.

High above the town is an old Capuchin monastery, complete with cloisters and shady courtyard. It has been for many years one of the most attractive hotels in the whole of Italy.

Ravello, three and a half miles away up in the hills, a small mountain city built by the Normans, must have been very prosperous in the Middle Ages. Here again the Saracenic influence is manifest, especially in the Palazzo Ruffolo, built in the eleventh century, and later used as a summer residence by some of the Angevin Kings. It has been considerably restored by English occupiers in the nineteenth century.

It has an arcaded courtyard and gardens of great beauty, with terraces overlooking the coast from a height of over a thousand feet. It is here that Wagner conceived the idea of Klingsor's Zaubergarten in the opera in Parsifal.

The Ruffoli received in their house Adrian IV (Nicholas Breakspear) the only English Pope. He must have preached in the Cathedral from the pulpit which has been reproduced faithfully in the Cathedral of Westminster in London. It is raised on six columns

with lions at the base. It was designed by Nicola di Bartolomeo, of Foggia, who was also responsible for the bust of a woman nearby.

This artist was one of the team collected by the Emperor Frederick II when he set out to revive in a new form the glories of ancient Rome.

Ravello, a half-deserted city now, has many quiet streets with relics of the past. One or two palaces, some ruins and everywhere astonishing views of sea and mountain.

Atrani, Minori and Maiori are small coast towns of great picturesqueness, with colour-washed houses, fishing-boats and pleasant taverns where meals can be enjoyed out of doors under arbours of vines or on sunny terraces.

The road continues to wind and turn all the way to Vietri where the wide Bay of Salerno suddenly comes into view.

It is an impressive sight, with the sloping wooded hills behind the town, the wide curve of the shore, and the dark blue mountains in the far distance rising over a long stretch of plain.

Salerno is of great antiquity. It existed in the days of the Romans, if not before, as a dependency of Paestum.

For a while it was an independent State, but its chief claim to distinction was the famous school of medicine, founded originally by the Arabs.

The Cathedral, though much restored, still evokes some of the greatness of the past. The doors like those at Amalfi, were brought from Constantinople. In the interior the bodies of Norman knights are buried in Roman sarcophagi, brought here from Paestum and still adorned with motifs from Greek mythology.

The chapel contains the tomb of the great Pope Gregory VII, the famous Hildebrand who set out to restore the spiritual power of the Church and humble the Holy Roman Emperors.

The mosaics were made by the order of Giovanni da Procida, citizen of Salerno, who organized the Sicilian Vespers, put an end to the rule of the Angevins on the island and brought in the Kings of Aragon in their stead.

The church retains many traces of Norman architecture, for it was built by Robert Guiscard, the bold adventurer who conquered southern Italy with a handful of men, and in the words of Gibbon, "In less than three years enjoyed the glory of delivering the Pope and

of compelling the two Emperors of the east and west to fly before his victorious arms."

For centuries Salerno has led a quiet provincial existence, only to be rudely awakened by the landing of the Allies in 1943. After a few weeks of torment as a battlefield, it was for some months the seat of the Italian Government.

Now it has relapsed once more into its usual calm. Beyond it begins the true south of Italy, the land of barren mountains and dusty plains, remote from the comparative prosperity of the north, with its population still waiting and hoping for release from the poverty and distress that have so long oppressed it.

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